

# **MARKET-LED AGRARIAN REFORM IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: Histories, Issues and Prospects**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Deininger, Byerlee, Norton, Selod and Stickler (2011, p.27) provide that global farmland expansion from 1990 to 2007, reached 1.5 billion hectares. This growth occurred in the countries of the Global South even as agricultural land use in the Global North diminished by some 3.3 million hectares. They describe this phenomenon as large-scale land acquisition under commodity-driven demand, such as in palm oil, for which the organization and directives of private capital are indispensable. A term for this process is elsewhere given as Market-Led Agrarian Reform (MLAR) (BORRAS, 2003; LAMBAIS, 2008; LAHIFF, BORRAS and KAY, 2007; BAER and FILIZZOLA, 2005; BALETTI et al., 2008). The significance of such market-directed investment initiatives is that they are frequently implemented in formerly colonized countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, in which the ownership and control over land are critical and deeply contested issues. A key term for the legitimacy of newly independent states in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century rested on

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decolonization and the restitution of land to formerly dispossessed communities. Historical injustice and the rights of indigenous peoples thus constitute a moral argument in favor of state led agrarian reform. Whereas post-apartheid South Africa was lauded for its early efforts in this regard, by the new millennium Fantu Cheru (2001) and John Saul (2001) respectively had thoroughly critiqued the new South African state for having embraced neoliberal market norms and reneged on prior promises.

A less obvious but equally important consideration for such newly independent states has been and remains policies regarding rural poverty and national food security. The lack of access to land and agricultural resources, as Borras, Kay and Lodhi (2007, p.1) elaborate, is closely related to underdevelopment and inequality. Effective and attentive state institutions and directives are fundamental for addressing such problems. Yet the trend since the 1990s towards MLAR suggests that states have been unable autonomously to accomplish such goals. This can be accounted for in terms of at least four factors: debt burdens, political conflict, policy prioritization in respect of institutional capacity, and elite resistance to redistributive programs (BORRAS, KAY and AKRAM-LODHI, 2007, p. 7; AKRAM-LODHI, 2007, p. 1440-1441; BORRAS, 2003; ROZELLE and SWINNEN, 2004, p. 447; LAMBAIS, 2008, p. 9). To a certain extent, problems and practices are inherited from prior structures: South Africa's debt obligations from the apartheid era and those of the Philippines in the post-Marcos democracy era constitute two examples. Such debt obligations pressed independent states to accept terms offered by international lenders under Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) agendas. This has included a greater role for the market in all sectors of the economy, including agriculture and land relations.

In other cases, however, change has occurred under democratic conditions in relation to state capacities. Brazil's Landless People's Movement (MST) forced the type and speed of land distribution on the state since the mid-1980s in the post-dictatorship era precisely in response to the parlous record of constitutional transfers of land to destitute farmers (LAMBALIS, 2008, p. 6). In other words, where Brazil was relatively ripe for MLAR domestically, mass democracy movements introduced an alternative approach. In contrast, in the Philippines, political conflict among local people's movement groups has made this possibility less attainable (REID, 2000, p. 40-43). Meanwhile, in South Africa, the state's overall dominance of political life has meant that a change in policy towards MLAR under neoliberal restructuring of the agricultural sector has been relatively unchallenged (BALETTI et al., 2008, p. 303).

From this brief overview, the following paper proposes to examine the debate surrounding MLAR from the perspectives of its proponents and critics. These ideas and findings are then reflected against the history of land and agrarian relations in three cases from three continents of the Global South: Brazil, the Philippines and South Africa. This elaboration seeks to identify common elements as well as particular characteristics that have a role to play in enabling or thwarting South-South dialogue and cooperation. Added to which, the question of resistance to dominant discourses and how resistance is mobilized is addressed. This is followed by a discussion of comparative and contrasting issues derived from the study, and a conclusion that brings the findings here to new areas relevant to South-South development: sovereignty, democracy and participation; South-South communication and epistemology building; and, the need to disseminate such experience and understanding.

**THE MLAR DEBATE: Investment or neocolonial exploitation?**

The debate over MLAR involves highly emotive language. A charge of neocolonialism, on one hand, is countered on the other by terms of necessity in a world of pressing factors like population growth and climate change. Proponents of MLAR forward a broad range of arguments in support of the position. Taking outsourcing as an engine of global growth, *The Economist* (2009), posits the farmland investment surge as the third wave of the offshore investment paradigm. Kanayo Nwanze, president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development or IFAD, holds that the MLAR investments offer “win-win” opportunities for stakeholders (KOVALYOVA, 2009; NAZARETH, 2010). Gary Blumenthal (2009, p. 57) sees the investment trend and its mode of implementation as “inevitable”.

Given such conjectures, profit maximization still requires that harvests from the Global South inevitably must be sold in rich country markets. Since population pressures and food security threats are more critically experienced in the Global South, not the Global North, it remains unclear how arguments in favour of MLAR like Blumenthal’s (2009) can alleviate existing concerns and raise large, rural populations from poverty in countries like the Philippines and South Africa. From another perspective, promises in the form of access to agricultural markets and labour mobility have been serially made and postponed by rich world countries even as subsidies provided to European and US agriculture, according to Stiglitz (2005, p. 7), have crowded out investment in Global South agriculture and diminished the chances for fair as opposed to free trade. Alternatively, Chartres and Varma (2011), focusing on the issue of water *vis-à-vis* land, hold that water is the key to productivity

improvements, but that reforms and management require the engine of state and local government combined with the active participation of small-scale farmers. Solutions need to be “locally-relevant” such as by means of small pumping systems rather than imposed from outside under large scale blueprints.

Nevertheless, an academic presentation of ideas in support of MLAR has been forwarded by Klaus Deininger and Hans Binswanger, according to Saturnino Borrás (2003, p. 368-369). Here, MLAR’s usurpation of the state-led agrarian reform (SLAR) model was explained as inevitable because limits on compensation to landowners, a ceiling on landholdings, and bureaucratic encumbrances served corruption and evasion rather than land redistribution. The market would eliminate these strictures through a settling price for willing buyers and willing sellers.

Borrás, Carranza and Franco (2007) take a nuanced stance against MLAR in describing its results in the Philippines under World Bank supported initiatives, beginning with a pilot project, in 1996 (BORRAS et al., 2007, p. 1558). They identify four ways by which MLAR has been implemented in the country: elite-elite; state-elite; foreign donor-elite; and poor-elite. In other words, through MLAR, elite interests benefitted substantially at the expense of all other stakeholders. Furthermore, land transfers under MLAR since 2003 were more limited in extent than what occurred under the constitutionally mandated Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), there were fewer beneficiaries, and the costs were up to six times higher (BORRAS et al., 2007, p. 1565-1566). This sum of results under MLAR crowds out and impairs redistribution of land on the basis of the constitution, historical injustice and peasant – or state-led initiatives, despite the relative effectiveness of the latter.

Other critics of MLAR in the past decade, but particularly since 2007, have been zeroing in on the drivers of this as a policy option. An elaboration from McMichael (2011, p. 6-7) and Deininger (2011, p. 217) is that one driver, incidental or otherwise, of MLAR investments was the United States' subprime housing market failure between 2007 and 2008. This precipitated a financial market and global credit crisis, in turn contributing to a commodities supply shock. Oil rose to over USD 150 per barrel while the FAO grain price index had tripled by April 2008 from a 2005 baseline, causing agricultural land-sparse countries like South Korea to declare domestic food security a priority in 2008 (GRAIN, 2008, p. 5; SPIELDOCH; MURPHY 2009, p. 42). Korean – and Chinese – state-backed enterprises engaged briskly in large-scale land deals in formerly colonized countries, like Tanzania and the Philippines (VON BRAUN and MEINZEN-DICK, 2009). In response, much of publicised material, particularly from NGO researchers, has labelled this wave of MLAR investments as “land grabs” (COTULA et al., 2009; BORRAS and FRANCO, 2010, 2011; MONTEMAYOR, 2009; GRAIN, 2008; DANIEL and MITTAL, 2009; DE LA CRUZ, 2011). Another assessment provides it as a “land rush” (McMICHAEL, 2011, p.1). Collated evidence for the idea derives from Deininger (2010) as well as Landportal's (2012) Land Matrix. The latter source has tabled 924 land deals since 2000 covering nearly 49 million hectares.

The basic point behind such critiques of MLAR in countries with weak institutions and unstable or corruptible governance is that land and water have been cleared of existing communities, which in general are poor or relatively powerless and rely on customary or traditional title rather than legally binding documentation. In countries like Vietnam and Tanzania, where land has in post colonial times been held in trust by the state, the scope for conflict and/or



dispossession has been acute. In general, lands transferred have been enclosed by means of force, and put to purposes that have direct bearing on foreign investor interests rather than in service to the indigenous communities and cultures (COTULA et al., 2009; ZOOMERS, 2011).

McMichael (2009) has argued that while the current conditions are not novel, they are precipitated by the structure of the world food regime whereby fossil fuel dependence and agribusiness monopoly pricing under an enabling financial and trade relations architecture drive the need for particular kinds of agricultural expansion into states that lack the capacity to resist. These assessments have created awareness and insight without necessarily clarifying what the fundamentals, prospects and implications of the deals are. Opponents and proponents of MLAR in its existing forms cannot both be correct. Instead they serve as advocacies of a partisan nature and contribute to the difficulty of deriving meaningful and reliable information on the processes.

The significance of this inquiry is therefore in trying to provide a clearer picture of the current status of MLAR implementation in three countries, one from each major continent that comprise the Global South, highlighting the similarities and differences in light of colonial histories, contemporary national land reform programs and dominant discourses used to promote MLAR to peasants and other stakeholders. This, in turn, advances a way for further examination of the potential implications related to questions of sovereignty, democracy, participation in development. More importantly, the paper contributes to further and enhanced South-South dialogue in aid of South-South cooperation, communication and shared visions for regional development outside of the dominant North-North neoliberal paradigm.

## MLAR AS THEORY AND POLICY

MLAR is forwarded as a viable alternative to State-Led Agrarian Reform (SLAR) in which a top down, bureaucracy managed, supply driven system identifies land and/or beneficiaries and appropriates the former for provision to the latter (BORRAS, 2003, p. 368). According to MLAR proponents, this has several deleterious effects, including corruption, evasion, entanglements in the courts, delays, and pricing that diminishes fair value to the landowner as well as awarding title to beneficiaries who are less likely to make a success of the beneficial venture. It provides relevant state agencies with axiomatic rent-seeking platforms and crowds out the provision of credit while taxing the state's capacity to ensure such additional factors as post-harvest facilities and market conduits (BANERJEE, 1999; BINSWANGER; DEININGER, 1997).

By contrast, MLAR is proposed as a transformative process under willing buyer-willing seller guidelines in which market processes shape agricultural relations most efficiently, fairly, effectively and quickly. This would govern land tenure, utilization, production, processing, marketing, and delivery of goods (DEININGER, 1999, 2003; DEININGER and BINSWANGER, 1999). The logic of the process relies on three assumptions: (1) the rational self interest of all stakeholders; (2) demand driven prospects that implicitly are more immediate, local and transparent; and (3) a decentralized bidding system in which the state supplies only an institutional framework and leaves the market to find its own level through negotiation and consultation (BUAINAIN et al, 1999; VAN ZYL, KIRSTEN and BINSWANGER, 1996). Transformation includes a gradual emergence of newer, younger, more energetic farmers, and optimal land sizing for the crop type best suited to



the existing agricultural and market conditions (DE JANVRY et al., 2001). These descriptions of the MLAR model are entirely consistent with the neoliberal fundamentals as laid out under the Washington Consensus (WILLIAMSON, 2003). They take into account none of the warning signals of the 1998 Asian economic crisis to say nothing of the later and more severe global credit crisis of 2008. Nevertheless, as Borrás (2003, p. 388-389) shows of three cases of MLAR implementation in Latin America and South Africa, in practice, the assumptions upon which MLAR rested do not hold adequately or at all. First, political factors cannot be relegated; secondly, because of such politics, willing buyers and sellers do not obtain freely, easily, or problem-free; and, thirdly, stakeholders as rational actors is more imaginary than real. Results of a study by Borrás, Carranza and Franco (2007) reveal, in the Philippines, that fewer distributions accrued to fewer beneficiaries at far higher costs than had been the case under SLAR.

Regardless, data from Land Portal (2012), an online public database on land deals and land governance initiated by the International Land Coalition (ILC) and Landtenure.info<sup>1</sup>, show that MLAR investments surged globally from 2001 until 2005 dipped briefly in 2007 and peaked conclusively 2009. Gary Blumenthal (2009), an advocate of this new land deal investment process, declared that changes in the structure of agricultural production are being driven by Malthusian population-food supply pressure; demand for high protein nutrition; China's influence as a commodity consumer; biofuels; and, diminishing returns from existing production capacity. He argues that technology and large scale production can add 400-500 percent to existing small lot yields. Farmland, furthermore, is a sound hedge against inflation, a portfolio diversifier, and an

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<sup>1</sup> URL: <http://landportal.info/>

opportunity to improve investor lifestyle features. He dismisses any focus on peasant agriculture as a suitable factor in increasing production as sentimental:

[M]eeting the food requirements of a larger and wealthier world population requires scale and capital investment. Using smallholdings agriculture as a development policy is like promising an automobile to everyone in the world, but limiting construction to hand labour (BLUMENTHAL, 2009, p. 67).

Factors relevant to this argument are freedom from regulation, profit repatriation, the elaboration of outsourcing production into primary production sectors, and a competitive urgency as mediated by the struggle maintain investor advantage in commodity industries.

### **MLAR as Neocolonial Expansion**

Opponents of MLAR approach the issue from diverse perspectives. Patnaik and Moyo (2011) see it as an intensified type of primitive accumulation and trace its antecedents from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century enclosures of private farmland in Britain through to the 1970s “Green Revolution” in Mexico and India. In their assessment, the link between structural adjustment programs and the land rush of the 2000s is definitive. In an earlier paper, Akram-Lodhi (2007) posits MLAR as akin to neoliberal restructuring of agriculture globally by way of the enclosure process. This promotes two results: the system of property relations under capitalism is embedded in the Global South and the system of peasant subsistence farming of the Global South is seconded to the model of large scale agribusiness. McMichael (2009), similarly, sees MLAR in terms of monopoly pricing under global agribusiness in the neoliberal dispensation

added to which particular shocks such as the 2007-2008 credit crisis act as spurs for investment action. Lahiff, Borras and Kay (2007) concur with the idea of the neoliberal umbrella under which MLAR operates and argue that MLAR fails to deliver on its promises in three key respects: (1) the political and economic force of large landowners denudes the assumption of a free and fair market such that the willing buyer-willing seller condition does not freely obtain; (2) land transfers are limited in both number and scope and come at a higher cost than could be obtained under SLAR or peasant led agrarian action; and (3) the issues of the landless and the rural poor are not adequately addressed. Other work addressing these issues, particularly in the Asian context includes that of Zoomers (2011), Borras (2003, 2008), Borras and Franco (2010, 2011), Borras, Hall, Schoones, White & Wolford (2011) and Manahan (2011).

In Brazil, criticism of the real beneficiaries of MLAR, the political interests subtending World Bank loan awards, and the effectiveness of large scale agricultural investments in practice has been undertaken by Sergio Sauer (2006, 2009), particularly with respect to increasing debt burdens. In examining the contest between agribusiness and the Landless People's Movement, or MST, in Brazil, Baer and Filizzola (2005) note the relative impact of technology and investment in large-scale farming in Brazil in contrast to the strategies and actions of the MST to achieve redistribution for the unlanded and the rural poor, concluding that co-existence of the two forces is possible.

Wendy Wolford's (2007) contribution to this argument holds that both populist and market-led programmes of land distribution are founded on a Lockean labour theory of property relations. Yet Lambais (2008) argues that both SLAR and MLAR in Brazil fail in achieving macro objectives of actual land transfer owing to

the ineradicable political element in the agrarian reform process. However, at the micro level wherein ongoing improvements to the land reform practice of both kinds can be realized, the utility of both models obtains. Juliano Assunção (2006), in a separate study, explains the particularity of these political elements in Brazil in terms of landlord sensitivity to expropriation measures. This accounts for both the poorly developed rental market for land as well as the non-agricultural use of farmland for such interests as inflation hedging, loan collateral and money laundering.

In South Africa, Lionel Cliffe (2000) considers the three-pronged approach by the newly democratic South African state post-1994 to address land redistribution, restitution-restoration-compensation for losses sustained under apartheid, and reform of apartheid and Bantustan era land tenure. The introduction of MLAR as a means of achieving these ends resulted in non-governmental agents controlling decision and action processes ineffectively. Implicitly, reform measures tended to benefit black African agricultural entrepreneurs at the expense of unlanded, dispossessed and poor or marginalized African communities. These findings concur with Lahiff's (2007) and Hall's (2010) respective studies demonstrating that poor, rural communities were marginalized by South Africa's MLAR programme. Existing white farmers, urban black insiders to state power, and donor sources such as the World Bank found MLAR practices appropriate and viable, and hence benefitted most from them. Decentralization of policy implementation furthermore runs the risk of transferring lands to tribal leadership that lacks democratic capacity or intentions. In noting that resistance and militancy against these measures is muted, Lahiff (2007) draws from Bernstein's (2003) historical overview of the South African agrarian phenomenon and the idea that both South Africa's systemic

revolution remains incomplete and the current wave of globalisation has decisively fragmented labour's capacity to articulate a negotiable position.

Manji (2006) contributes the idea that an unintended consequence for investor-friendly South Africa of MLAR may be the extent to which its markets in land and water resources become ever more affordable to foreign investors and ever less affordable to South Africans. Notwithstanding the expense to willing buyers, the process has been slow. As Cherryl Walker (2005), Hall and Ntsebeza (2007) point out, South Africa transferred only 3.5 percent of formerly white-owned farmland to African beneficiaries in the first decade of democratic independence. This contradicts a primary motivation of the national liberation movement in South Africa to fulfil the three promises of restitution, redistribution and protection from the violence and injustice that characterized the apartheid past. Admos Chimhowu's (2006) findings are more encompassing. He critiques the pervasiveness of political rhetoric at the expense of real institutional support, resource provision, or support systems even for existing beneficiaries. Also, the selection of projects and programs and marginal lands has widened the poverty trap rather than increased opportunities for communities. Most importantly, there is evidence across southern Africa of policy capture by elites at the expense of legitimate beneficiaries. Similarly to Cliffe (2000) and Hall (2010) he notes the tendency for tenure policy under tribal leadership to disadvantage the poor. MacDonald (2003), meanwhile, looks at two aspects of the land reform agenda. One is the discourse of development for small-scale women farmers in the context of redistributive justice for historical victims of land expropriation. The other is its undermining after 1998 by an alternative and contradictory

discourse of economic development privileging market oriented production where in agricultural terms this equated with MLAR.

## **Synthesis**

Despite the wealth of research, commentary and advocacy against MLAR or its implementation alongside other modes of agrarian reform, MLAR is still maintained by its proponents under the watchword of “viability”, by which economic productivity, profitability, and export-orientation are implied or stipulated. However, Cousins and Schoones (2009) argue that viability must be seen in human rather than economic terms: the viability of peasant communities on whose land MLAR is imposed need to be prioritized above other considerations. This point has also been made relevant by others, like Arce and Marsden (1993, p. 306-307), in reporting the effects of free trade economics on peasant farmers in Chile. Commercial agri-business encroachment under state-directed initiatives in the dictatorship era of the 1980s-1990s displaced between 200.000 to 250.000 families to marginal spaces between their former holdings and urban areas with no public services. Colchester and Chao (2011) and Derek Hall (2011) document how palm oil, among other commodity crops like cocoa and coffee, have been engines of dispossession for indigenous and peasant peoples in South East Asia in recent years. In this scenario, transformation of agrarian relations under MLAR and the neoliberal approach has effectively ruined the livelihoods and in some cases the lives of those it is meant to raise from poverty.

Overall, however, issues related to the lack of reliable information and intense emotional and theoretical polarity of arguments between those promoting and advocating against MLAR



pose as obstructions towards a truly nuanced understanding or even appreciation of MLAR as a social development option in the Global South. In particular, the relative dearth of data available *from* (as opposed to *about*) countries such as the Philippines, Brazil and South Africa regarding the status, scope and effects of MLAR implementation in these respective territories is noteworthy. As earlier detailed, Chimhowu (2006) is not alone in detailing that reliable information is difficult to obtain, particularly with respect to evaluating and monitoring MLAR implementation comparative to SLAR and peasant-led initiatives such as La Via Campesina's. Moreover, as Jayatri Ghosh (2011) makes clear, many of the MLAR land deals have been agreed to in terms that might best be described as secretive and unequal in the extreme. Contracts are a few pages long, terms are ill-defined, and funding opaque. Yet many deals are for beneficial tenure of between 25 and 99 years at upfront rates of USD 35 per hectare, and annual rents of as little as USD 1.20 per hectare per year for the duration of the lease. Does this gap support one major argument of groups opposing MLAR implementation – that the lack of transparency especially on the part of the state as MLAR implementors is intentional – or is it a ground to err on the side of caution and put good faith in the institutions backing MLAR?

This paper addresses the need to describe the impetus and current status, as far as practicable, of MLAR in the three countries as sample cases from each continent in the Global South. These will be discussed in the context of each country's colonial histories and in light of the current struggles with national land reform implementation. Similarities and differences that obtain will be particularly given focus. For the reason stated above, academic research in the field must be complemented with journalistic, interview and book reports. An example of this approach is provided by the work of The Land

Matrix (LANDPORTAL.INFO, 2012). Here, five research centres collate the findings of over 40 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), academic research, journalism and fieldwork to present an aggregated tableau of global MLAR practices, priorities and trends. While imperfect, this type of approach has the added benefit of opening inquiry to insights and participation along the lines of South-South dialogue envisaged and promoted by the Fifth South-South Summer Institute.

## Method

Taking Global South dialogue and cooperation as basic to this issue of *Ciência & Trópico*, the approach in this paper is to discuss, compare and contrast three MLAR cases on three continents of the South: Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia. The basis for selection of the cases in Brazil, South Africa and the Philippines is that, primarily, in their respective post-colonial eras all three have a significant and roughly simultaneous history of authoritarian or dictatorial control of at least two decades. Between the 1960s and 1980s, Brazil was ruled by government under military control; Ferdinand Marcos's civilian dictatorship dominated Philippine politics; and South Africa remained under apartheid control until 1994. All have direct experience of financial and economic instability concomitant to dependency on foreign donors. The Philippines and Brazil have had Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) imposed on them since the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. South Africa's economy was effectively derailed when foreign loans were rescinded in the late 1980s. All three countries have had or are intent on regional influence in their respective continents. Importantly, all have implemented significant programs of MLAR. In Brazil,

the *Cédula da Terra* compares with South Africa's *Reconstruction and Development Program* (RDP) and to a different extent with the *Philippine Agricultural and Development and Commercial Corporation* (PADCC). While the differences between the three countries are great, of particular interest to the concerns of this paper are the structure and practice of land reform, as will be discussed in the following section.

## **LAND REFORM AND COLONIAL PASTS**

The following sections tackle the history of land reform in Brazil, the Philippines and South Africa, to shed more light on the origins and impetus of the current drive for MLAR. The discussion on Brazil focuses on the origins and current efforts of the Movement of Rural Landless Workers or MST, which is credited as the largest grassroots organization of peasants and rural workers in Brazil aiming to “depend their right to work the land” (MST, 2003). In South Africa, the discussion inevitably zeroes in on the dismantling of apartheid and its unexpected consequences for national land reform initiatives. The discussion on the Philippines appears more extensive not only due to the immediate availability of data on land deals covered by MLAR, but also owing to the larger body of literature that has devoted itself to this area of the globe. This is an important finding of Borras and Franco (2010) who discovered that “land grabbing” in the context of MLAR has been most extensively and systematically implemented in the Southeast Asian region. The implications of this and the relatively uneven access to information, particularly those published in the English language, are discussed in the succeeding portion of the paper.

## Land Reform and People's Participation in Brazil

Brazil's land area was divided into fifteen tracts or captaincies by the Portuguese monarchy soon after colonization in the 1530s and awarded to select beneficiaries under hereditary terms of tenure. Subsequently, to encourage settlement during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century sugar boom awards of land known as *sesmaria* were implemented, giving total control over the land to the tenant provided cultivation was maintained (LAMBALIS, 2008, p. 2; ASSUNÇÃO, 2006, p. 1-2). Although the provision that land remain productive is a term in the post-dictatorship constitution of 1988, Sauer (2006, p. 177) cites a 1996 census report detailing 25 million fallow hectares (60 percent of all arable land). In short, the immense concentration of land ownership among a small minority has been socially and economically unproductive. Simmons (2004, p. 183) records a brief history of conflict over land across the country beginning with the Canudos War of 1821 to the Contestado Rebellion of 1912 and various long running struggles in Western Paraná (1940s), Mato Grosso (1950s) and Pará (1990s) including the killing of 19 peasant farmers in 1996. Alston, Libecap and Mueller (1999) link ongoing conflict in Amazonia between landless communities and landowners to accelerated deforestation: since the beneficial use is one Constitutional criterion for legal tenancy and the forests are excluded from productive use considerations, both clearances and violence are structurally guaranteed. In conjunction, Cullen (2005, p. 749-751) notes the conflict between the landless people's movement (MST) and conservationists over forest clearances. Real land reform advances in Brazil are thus social, economic and environmental in focus.

While land reform efforts began under the military dictatorship with the Land Act of 1964, an effect of the corresponding economic modernization program was to promote such agricultural activity as soybean production by means of loans, credit and input incentives (BAER ; FILIZZOLA, 2005, p. 6). This further subsumed small and medium-sized farms into Brazil's fledgling agribusiness industry, effectively sterilizing any purpose towards alleviating Brazil's grossly unequal socio-economic relations (ASSUNÇÃO, 2006, p. 6). As late as 1996, farms of over 1.000 hectares still constituted less than one percent of the total number and over 45 percent of the total farm area in the country (SAUER, 2006, p. 178)

According to Lambais (2008, p. 8) and Assunção (2006, p. 6) incipient attempts to instigate land reform to address social and economic inequality began from 1971 with the establishment of INCRA (National Institution for Rural Settlement and Agrarian Reform): a merging of two separate state entities intended less to redistribute land than to forestall peasant mobilization and relocate people to relatively uninhabited areas. The establishment of the MST, after 1984, from small beginnings in the south of Brazil answered the state on the limits of its policy and capacity and created the necessary challenge by planning, organizing and administering occupations and redistribution of non-productive farm properties. Wolford (2003, p. 201) estimates that, in over 25 years, the MST has seen to 2.500 occupations and the supply of workable lands for 370.000 families.

Among those who have described and critiqued the work of the MST in English are Hammond (1999), McMichael (2006), Desmarais (2007), Wolford (2003, 2007, 2010) and Borras (2008). Wolford's (2003) summation of three factors in the genesis and success of the MST are salutary: agricultural production initiatives

during the military dictatorship that produced a massive landless class; the restoration of democracy in 1985; and, the support of determined religious movements in the rural areas (WOLFORD, 2003, p. 201-202; NAVARRO, 2000). Wolford (2010), moreover, describes the details of how lands are identified, how accommodations with state actors are negotiated, and how the process and rules of occupation are undertaken. Where this kind of direct action has been construed as an affront to property rights and democratic norms (KEEN ; HAYNES, 2009), it must be seen in contrast to two major thrusts of a contrary kind. One is the emerging dominance within Brazil of its domestic agribusiness industries since the 1990s (MUELLER ; MUELLER, 2006, p. 9). Another is the proliferation of corporate and state-involved land deals implemented in recent years in many former colonies of the Global South, as addressed by Borras, Hall, Schoones, White and Wolford (2011), among others.

### **The State, Elites and Land Reform in the Philippines**

Since 1988, the Philippines has had one of the world's longest SLAR programs: the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) (MANAHAN, 2011, p.13). It was instituted with a 20 year mandate to redistribute private and public lands to peasant beneficiaries. The program ended in 2008, with mixed results, because well over 1 million hectares of private lands had escaped redistribution and private deals were deliberately set up to immediately take advantage of CARP's imminent expiry, a new initiative was forced into law, in 2009. Known as CARPER (CARP Extension with Reforms), it is due to expire in 2014. Despite a massive budget, it has thus far succeeded in redistributing about 20 percent of its mandated domains (Source). In this frame alone, Philippine land



reform conditions differ markedly from those undertaken in Brazil by the MST over the past 25 years (MST, 2009a).

The context for agrarian reform in the Philippines begins decisively with U.S. colonial control from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The U.S., as immediate successor to Spanish domination, exacerbated extractive and exploitative conditions rather than alleviated them as had originally been promised (FRANCO, 2000, p. 37-38, 72; BORRAS, 2008, p. 3-6). Furthermore, U.S. control instituted a landed oligopoly as the legislative controllers of the archipelago; and, in the promotion of a cash crop export economy, drew large numbers of the rural population into entrenched conditions of economic and social servitude. The resistance that this fomented contributed to the contemporary Philippine political economy (FRANCO ; BORRAS, 2005, p. 4,8).

Philippine resistance over unjust relations on the land has been continuous in differing degrees of intensity since at least 1745, the date of a major uprising against the religious orders that dominated agricultural land holdings in the Spanish colonial era (McANDREW, 1994, p. 19; FRANCO, 2000, p. 64). Responses to the struggle over land control, use and ownership have involved a range of political ploys. Prior to the Japanese occupation in 1942, this included the eviction and transplantation of tenant farmers from politically sensitive areas of Luzon to other parts of the archipelago, notably to Mindanao under Manuel Quezon's presidential policies (ESCALANTE, 2002, p.1; TRICOM, 1998, p. 8; FRANCO, 2000, p. 88). To the extent that this reduced contested land rights in Luzon Province, the principal island in the archipelago, it multiplied problems in the southern-most islands.

Under President Magsaysay in the 1950s, according to David Wurfel (1988, p. 15), the first significant land reform ideas

were promulgated but achieved little, in part because both tillers and owners of the land were not capable of being mutually placated and, as under Manuel Quezon, landowners dominated the legislature so securely that change to the ownership status quo was effectively sterilized (McANDREW, 1994, p. 45; ABINALES and AMOROSO, 2005, p. 182). Actual land distribution did make significant headway under the Ferdinand Marcos era (WURFEL, 1988, P. 169) but was limited to rice and corn, and was staged experimentally in Luzon, specifically in places like Neuva Ecija (CALDERON, 1978, p. 1). This area was notable for conditions of tenant servitude owing to indebtedness, excessive usury, and generations of inherited poverty that escalated drastically under the U.S. administration (FRANCO, 2000, p. 76).

Calderon's (1978) explanation of this land reform scheme following Marcos's Presidential Decree No. 27 of 1972 reveals several key points. Firstly, agrarian reform in the Philippines was deliberately technocratic or centrally planned, accommodating the institutional concerns of multiple state agencies. This excluded the preferences or perspectives of farmers themselves, whose perceived backwardness was a factor in their exclusion (CALDERON, 1978, p. 2, 7). Secondly, the complexity and cost of contingencies like credit, infrastructure, post-harvest facilities, marketing and chemical inputs needed in the long term to make a success of reform initiatives, effectively crowded out any peasant participation (CALDERON, 1978, p. 5). Yet, as Brazil's MST has taken pains to demonstrate in over 25 years of peasant-led land reform initiatives, land reform from above and without input and post-harvest support is fatally flawed. In the Philippines, research by IBON (1998), Tecson (2009) and Flores-Obanil (2008) show that basic problems like poor health and expensive medicines, low quality and access to education, and

unfair valuation of farmers' produce, are common obstacles to the developmental prospects of peasant farmers. Moreover, farming inputs required for production are both prohibitively priced, if at all available, and not endogenously designed or developed by the farmers themselves, which in turn often results in debt. Land reform beneficiaries are thus trapped in a paternalistic web of agencies, departments, and institutions that govern but do not build their capacity.

The era after Marcos is fundamental to an understanding of the agrarian reform program's impetus and contestation in 2008-2009. The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), emphasizing the return of the land to those who worked it, was the centrepiece to the new constitution enshrined in 1987 under President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, whose presidency followed the 1986 'People Power Revolution' (ABINALES ; AMOROSO, 2005, p. 234). Redistributive land reform was thus originally drafted during what was deemed an opportune time for left-of-centre politics (RIEDINGER, 1995, p. 13). However, obstacles to its realization surfaced almost immediately via presidential hesitancy amid struggles for legitimacy from both the far left and the far right; congressional delays, dilution of the terms via loophole clauses, exemptions, and demands for landlord compensation; and outbreaks of violence between landless peasants and the state, most notably the Mendiola Bridge massacre of 19 farmers on January 22, 1987 (RIEDINGER, 1995; PUTZEL, 1992, p. 221; BORRAS, 2001, p. 546). President Cory Aquino herself was severely compromised since her elite landed family owned a 6.435 hectare sugar estate in Hacienda Luisita, located north of Manila, that had been founded on a contractual obligation of redistribution to the peasants that inhabited it – a promise that was conveniently forgotten over time

(ABINALES; AMOROSO, 2005, p. 235). Distribution of this estate to its tenants has remained a perennial flash point in owner-tenant politics across the country and only in 2011 was given unanimous adjudication by the Supreme Court in favour of the peasant farmers (BUSINESS WORLD, 2011,).

The inconsistent or limited implementation of CARP, since 1988, has been attributed to a number of factors. These include weak or co-opted leadership at the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), shortfalls in budgetary allotments, the capacity of owners to evade requirements, and the conversion of estates into residential or industrial lots (BELLO, 2009, p. 52-58). While a statistical analysis conducted by Reyes (2002, p. 20-46) shows that “agrarian reform had a positive impact on farmer beneficiaries” in terms of higher real per capita income and reduced poverty incidence between 1990 and 2000, Borrás and others (2009, p. 14) point out that the DAR has achieved far less than it set out to do, and less even than it claimed of its targets. Gross figures suggest that 6,000,000 hectares was distributed to 3,000,000 beneficiary families over the 20 years of CARP’s implementation (BORRAS et al., 2009, p. 14); but, since much of this distribution did not represent real land reform but made use of public, marginal or idle lands, or even distributions purely on paper for bureaucratic purposes, an area of 30 per cent less may constitute fair representation (BORRAS, 2008b, p. 9; BELLO, 2009, p. 80; RIEDINGER, 1995, p. 194). The least budgeted and most limited land distributions are reported by Bello (2009, p. 57) as having taken place under the explicitly neoliberal presidency of Gloria Arroyo (2001-2010). Of particular note is the Philippine Agricultural Development and Commercial Corporation’s (PADCC) earmarking of over 3 million hectares of almost 25 percent of the Philippines’ arable land for foreign investment ventures (DEININGER, 2010).

By the end of CARP's allotted period of implementation in 2008, it had become what Bello (2009, p. 65) terms an "orphan program". Its achievements in having come to life at all were offset by various stalemates: ideological exhaustion, interminable political and financial costs, and population growth outstripping productive possibilities. As the Philippines became more industrialized, populated and tourism oriented, land prices and the pressure by developers for conversion of "rice bowl" agricultural zones, such as in Cavite and Batangas, became clamorous (SEROTE, 2004, p. 302; BELLO, 2009, p. 51-52; McANDREW 1994, p. 12-13). To this, annual weather calamities, particularly during harvest season, as Boudreau (2001, p. 44) and Ofreneo and Serrano (1991, p. 3) note, further adversely affect sustained rural development in the agricultural sector.

For many observers, particularly landlord legislators, the opportunity to let CARP end in 2008 was therefore well regarded and the idea then that CARP could be prolonged was deemed almost impossible (LIM, 2009, p. 5-6). Furthermore, a concurrent model of land reform under market leadership championed by the World Bank held that land distribution on voluntary terms, rather than by expropriations, was optimal. But MLAR, as Borras and others (2009, p. 14) point out, achieved extremely limited distribution at a cost approximately six times higher than even the state-mediated model, it was not a fit solution to any pro-tiller movement. Contextually, Herring (1999, p. 2) points out a paradox in the politics and philosophy of agrarian reform: where the political change needed for real reform must be made to work through the existing political process itself, little or nothing can be expected to happen. Only under revolutionary or interventionist conditions, as in China, Taiwan, South Korea and

Japan in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, might general effective change happen (PUTZEL, 1992, p.116; HAYAMI et al., 1990, p.3).

Along this line of reasoning, the far left National Democratic platform in the Philippines mirrored that of the conservative right in seeking an end to CARP, yet for entirely different reasons. The Left's insistence had consistently been for a Genuine Agrarian Reform Program (GARP) that eliminated loopholes and pointedly ignored elite special pleading and the right of landowners to market-based compensation (RIEDINGER, 1995, p. 149-151). As in the decision of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to boycott the elections of 1986 that ultimately collapsed the Marcos regime and which split the party, a point made by Fuwa (2000, p. 38) and Riedinger (1995, p. 127), the decision to reject the continuation of CARP poses necessary and acute questions for participatory democracy in the Philippines: to what extent could new schisms or a hardening of approaches result? Equally importantly, the steps taken to promote CARPER create other questions about participatory development: to what extent is a unifying force or, conversely, a new competitive wedge driven into the arena of resistance against the status quo?

While CARPER has been in existence for almost three years, implementation has been stalled and debates are not yet settled. The DAR is on target to redistribute less than 50 per cent of the designated lands by the time CARPER expires. Nevertheless, critics of the CARPER program, particularly the far left National Democrats, maintain that the program was always structurally designed to fail because it ignored or eliminated the voice and engagement of those groups that have consistently argued for full participation on terms determined by peasant communities themselves (MARIANO, 2012). In other words, as in the reform program instituted under Ferdinand



Marcos in the 1970s, a top down, elite-administered system is in place without the requisite investment in and support for the peasant beneficiaries. Valuable and decisive lessons remain to be learned from the experience of Brazil's MST (2009b).

### **Land Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

To elaborate, from Moyo and Yeros (2005, p. 4-6), the South African case is a prime example of 20<sup>th</sup> Century white-settler colonization under a globalizing imperial construct that set a high premium on Global South resources for ventures and competition in other theatres. The social and economic legacy across Southern Africa but particularly in South Africa exhibits deep, intransigent cleavage along race and class lines amid gross inequality in resources and opportunities.

White settler colonial agriculture was secured in South Africa in 1913 by the Native Lands Act under which 90 percent of the productive farmland was reserved exclusively for white farmers even though the white settler population was never more than 6 percent of the total (HALL; NTSEBEZA, 2007, p. 2). Black farmers, large numbers of which were women heads of home, were sequestered on marginal lands of indifferent fertility and irregular rainfall in nominally independent homelands known as Bantustans. In both South Africa and Zimbabwe, as Moyo and Yeros (2005, p. 4) point out, racial and social cleavage developed out of competition between mining and agricultural interests for steady supplies of on-site labour at low rates of pay. This gave rise to a large foreign born wage labour contingent from neighbouring countries like Malawi, Mozambique and Lesotho. Their legacy is one of "double-victimization": exploited for their labour and yet disdained by indigenous local people who by

the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in both Zimbabwe and South Africa preferred them to be evicted or deported (MOYO, RUTHERFORD and AMADOR-WILKS, 2000, p. 189).

South Africa abolished the racist system of apartheid after democratic elections in 1994 concomitant to formal processes of reconciliation and nation-building. Part of this objective was the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) of 1995 (BORRAS, 2003, p. 373). Like the *Cédula da Terra*, a project in Brazil, it was an incipient promotion of MLAR. Cherryl Walker (2005, p. 805) explains the three facets of land reform in South Africa as land restitution to those dispossessed of it under apartheid; land redistribution to the landless and poor majority; and to provide security from violence to the citizens in general. Under the RDP, an envisaged 30 percent of some 99 million hectares under private white farmer ownership would be redistributed to approximately 8 million families under a cost ceiling per beneficiary between 1994 and 1999. Since landowners could evade land restitution measures, results in this category of righting historical injustice were negligible by 2001 (BORRAS, 2003, p. 384). Although land shortages are a constant issue, particularly during elections, by 2004 a mere 3.5 percent of formerly white farmland had been transferred to African farmer beneficiaries (WALKER, 2005, p. 806; HALL; NTSEBEZA, 2007, p. 9). The democratic state thus experienced and continues to experience real and serious demands from a fast growing population for developmental change to offset historical deficits and to bolster the legitimacy of the state as liberator from such impositions (CHERU, 2001, p. 506). However, the meagre actualization record since 1994 indicates a problem of coherence and compatibility in the discourses of the major actors. Walker's (2005, p. 823) assessment is that South Africa has developed an economy entirely disconnected from its

agrarian past in which the peasantry does not count for much. Three consequential conditions instead obtain: black elite empowerment at the expense of redistributive justice, decentralization by default in favour of traditional or tribal leadership and a rhetorical approach to rural poverty.

The first condition, as Hall (2010, p. 180, 184) observes, with the failure to act early and speedily on real land redistribution, the South African state has shifted the discourse to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). This program maintains general structures and socio-economic relations but enlarges the space in the name of land reform specifically for African elites and connected interests to seamlessly claim a share of valuable enterprises. This has involved share transfers and corporate board appointments that do little to alleviate pressure and problems for the many millions of urban and rural poor.

One acute example of this as a problem is how, despite the Constitution's gender equality provisions, it affects women farmers. MacDonald (2003) and Simon-Kumar (2007) consider that the state's discourse of upliftment for female and new farmers, as well as redistributive justice for historical victims, was consciously undermined after 1998 by an alternative and contradictory discourse of economic development privileging market oriented production. Added to this and in respect of MLAR initiatives designed by foreign donors, Hall's (2010) and Cliffe's (2000, p. 273) respective insight is acute: land policy for impoverished black women farmers in South Africa is all too often made by foreign, white, male agricultural economists who do not themselves farm for a living. In South Africa, for example, as Potts (2000, p. 807-808) and Hall (2010, p. 179-180) show, where stewardship of agricultural land in rural areas has for generations been occupied by housewives, state policy discourse

does not recognize women as valid or “committed” farmers. Instead, official policy presses absent or urban-based males to return to the rural areas or else lose their right to own farmland.

A second consequential issue is the historical question of indirect rule as Williams (1996, p. 211), Moyo and Yeros (2005, p. 6), Alexander (1994, p. 333) and Moore (2001, p. 913) give account. While Roman Dutch Law maintained South Africa as an asset in the semi-periphery of the world system of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the colonial state itself was responsible for the project of national development through commodity production, as Bernstein (2003, p. 205-206) puts it. This gave rise to necessary liaisons and relations with tribal elders and chieftains that has persisted through to the present. Following democratic independence in 1994, ties between the state and traditional leaders were enhanced and supported. By 2001, the chieftains had control over access to land for 17 million people (MOORE, 2001, p. 921). Regional cultural conditions, tribal litigation procedures, and decision-making on land tenure and distribution can cause serious tensions and conflict even in areas where land is relatively abundant. In particular cases, the state’s institutions are impotent to exercise control or effect change. A rider to this understanding is that, as Lahiff and Cousins (2001) anticipate, the chief beneficiaries in South Africa of future redistribution initiatives will likely be commercial-industrial black farmers and tribal chieftains. This could be described as decentralization by default than by outright policy concession.

A third consequence of the state’s post-apartheid policy of delaying or postponing redistributive justice and land restitution is the issue of rural poverty. Sarah Bracking (2003) and Charles Meth (2004) respectively identify a fundamental issue in the ongoing proletarianization of the rural poor: the use of cash transfers serves

as policy in lieu of genuine land reform programs. Meth (2004, p. 22-23), for example, argues that post-apartheid South African state discourse, by the use of terms like “victimhood” and “dependency”, discriminates against the poor while obviating the requirement of the state to relieve conditions that are structurally unchanged from the oppressive legacy of South Africa’s racist past.

## **MLAR IN THREE CONTEXTS**

The case closest to South Africa with which it can be compared is Zimbabwe which opted, in 2000, for a fast-track SLAR program of expropriation and redistribution of prime farmland. Officially proclaimed as the “Third Chimurenga” (Uprising), most of Zimbabwe’s 4500 white farmers lost their holdings in the process and as many as 500,000 commercial farm workers and their families, particularly the foreign born, lost their livelihoods and homes. Hundreds of farms were handed over to government insiders and elites with limited farming experience (WILLEMS, 2004, p. 1772, 1774-1776). Donald Williams (1996) would argue that the Zimbabwe example typifies land reform in Africa. It enlarges the state’s mandate and coercive legitimacy at the expense of other areas of development in an arbitrary and uncoordinated way. In a neo-paternalistic sense it is aimed at satisfying “disparate interests of well-placed individuals, their families, and other favoured groups (WILLIAMS, 1996, p. 207).

By contrast, within a decade of democratic independence South Africa had turned to the MLAR program of willing-buyer/willing seller or a strategic neglect of the problem of land redistribution. This, as Lahiff (2007) claims, is an accommodation of state and market-led processes with normative rhetoric about justice

and democracy (LAHIFF, 2007). Yet it has both failed in itself and has multiplied the problems that must eventually be addressed. If South Africa feels it can afford the luxury of benign neglect of land issues, it is because the state has accommodated itself to its role as an emerging regional and strategic power in a globalising world, as argued or indicated by Moore (2005), Cheru (2001), and Manji (2006). O'Sullivan's (2009) point is incisive: the viability of land redistribution of the official market-driven kind adversely affects democracy as a whole.

## **MLAR AND PROSPECTS FOR SOUTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE**

To advance South-South dialogue and terms of understanding in the area of land and agrarian relations, it is necessary to identify what experiences obtain, how they have come into being and what commonalities and differences exist. Market-led Agrarian Reform (MLAR) offers particular terms of comparison and contrast across the three cases of Brazil, the Philippines and South Africa. In the argument advanced here such conditions must be seen within the context of path dependencies of centuries of gross inequality in land relations and land ownership. Even in 20<sup>th</sup> Century, under the Brazilian military dictatorship, the Ferdinand Marcos decades in the Philippines and South Africa's apartheid regime, economic modernization programs respectively privileged a narrow elite set at the expense of the large majority of the urban and rural poor. This in turn proved to be a catalyst for resistance and opposition, after and despite which a secondary wave of investment under neoliberal conditions occurred at roughly the same time in all three places. These market-led initiatives from the 1990s under the auspices of foreign lenders summarize as the *Cédula da Terra*, in Brazil, the



Reconstruction and Development Programme in South Africa and the public-private development projects under Gloria Arroyo, in the Philippines. In all three cases investment in agricultural pilot projects fed into a later wave of investments that were categorized as Market-led Agrarian Reform a decade ago and in more recent years have been described as land rushes or land grabs. The more pejorative term, land grabs, owes much to the types of contract that have been drawn up, the speed and secrecy of agreements and the effects on local communities who in many cases in all three countries have been waiting for land restitution, land redistribution or just compensation under state mandated directives or constitutional guarantees.

Significant differences among the three cases can be considered on the following terms: (1) resistance and opposition and (2) the discourses in operation.

South Africa is the most recent of the three cases to obtain political emancipation from colonial era control. More importantly, the national liberation movement, the African National Congress, has been in power since 1994 with an unassailable majority, virtually guaranteeing it long term control of the state and the nation under the condition that no revolution occurs in the interim. However, reform, restitution and/or compensation, particularly regarding land, has been slow and limited since democratic independence. Civil society organizations like the Landless People's Movement (LPM) are too close to the ruling ANC both in leadership and aspirations to make the same impression on landowners and the state that the MST in Brazil has done (BALETTI et al., 2008, p. 292).

In the Philippines, the liberation movement most closely seeking root and branch change in the country, the National Democrat alliance of groups and movements, has never been in power. Instead, since the era of US control a narrow oligarchy of landed interests

has maintained political control and coercive relations on the land with respect to peasant farmers and the landless (PUTZEL, 1992, p. 183-186, 221). A problem for opposition movements is a deep and abiding split stemming from ideological disagreements since the late 1980s (REID, 2000, p. 41).

Brazil's experience of a neoliberal turn under the first term of Fernando Henrique Cardoso was in part aimed at redirecting land reform processes to market-managed solutions (SAUER, 2008, p. 178-179). This was reined in to some extent in the second Cardoso term as well as by Lula's government albeit at the expense of the far left wing of the party.

Regardless of such turns, the achievements of the MST, the world's largest social movement (LAMBAIS, 2008, p. 6; ASSUNÇÃO, 2006) are considerable but difficult to emulate in other socio-political environments. A compelling possible example of South-South cooperation between the MST and South Africa's Landless People's Movement (LPM) since 2001 has not brought much to fruition (BALETTI et al, 2008, p. 290). Despite the commonalities apparent between the two movements, the bases of exchange exhibit dissimilarities of internal dynamics, history, timing, purpose, strategies and methods. The MST owns three attributes that differ from the LPM: its leadership is drawn from offspring of peasant farmers; it employs direct occupation strategies; and it is independent of state, business and civil society. Furthermore, it has been supported by a broad-based religious base (WOLFORD, 2003, p. 201-203; McKEON, WATTS and WOLFORD, 2004, p. 39-40). In the Philippines, by contrast, the National Democrat coalition of peasant groups is smaller than the MST; it is unable to mount direct occupations of farmland without facing an onslaught by the state military, the police, and private armies of the landed classes; and

the movement remains outside of religious support, especially of the predominant Catholic Church.

A second primary issue, the discourses over land reform across the three cases, also exhibit particular terms of comparison and contrast. Dominant discourses, or discourses from above – those of the state under neoliberal tendencies and of the market, for example – promote democracy, freedom and the logic of the market. Terms such as efficiency, viability, development, profit and growth are reliable fixtures in the vocabulary in use (DEININGER, 1998; COUSINS and SCOONES, 2009; BORRAS, 2003). Resistant discourses, or discourses from below, see land in terms of historical, social, cultural and communal meanings. Landscapes are “embedded within sets of social relations” that the principles of the market seek to alienate and transform rapidly and entirely (AKRAM-LODHI, 2007, p. 1439). Whereas a term such as “democracy” may be incorporated by all actors in the struggle over rights and access to land, it has differentiated meanings and purpose depending on which actor uses it and in particular contexts. This holds true even in places as intransigently unequal as Brazil, the Philippines and South Africa (BORRAS, KAY & AKRAM-LODHI, 2007; CHERU, 2001). Differences that occur in all three contexts are eminently valuable for beginning and maintaining any form of South-South dialogue on land relations. More importantly, such differences relate to an intractably problematic issue: how is reliable information to be obtained and disseminated about such land deals in a continuous and educationally useful way so that real learning about what is happening can be constructed and developed? How can the gaps in the knowledge base be filled and what interests would thereby be best served, the proponents or critics of MLAR?

In South Africa, Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), an official discourse from above, has worked to the benefit of state insiders and their allies (HALL, 2010, p. 184) in a version of neopatrimonial practice evident elsewhere in Africa. More importantly, South Africa, like Brazil, has accommodated itself to a role in the neoliberal configuration of states seeking recognition at the top table of global politics. It is less surprising, thus, that both South Africa and Brazil are included as investor states in the global farmland spree of the past decade (LANDPORTAL, 2012; DEININGER, 2010). Yet, the rights and equality of women as governed by South Africa's model Constitution of 1996 are explicitly undermined by the lack of state support for women farmers and the stipulation that men return to their home regions to claim land at the risk of forfeiture (POTTS, 2000; MacDONALD, 2003; SIMON-KUMAR, 2007; HALL, 2010). Moreover, viability in the agriculture sector has come in the neoliberal turn South Africa has taken to mean economic profitability rather than the life and livelihoods of the people who have traditionally farmed the land. In the Philippines, women also nominally enjoy equal rights with men but many women farmers cannot get or are ineligible to deed title to the land they farm, or even to inheritance when married to a titled farmer. The labour of women and children in rural Philippines remains effectively unpaid (FLORES-OBANIL, 2008, p. 20, 30). The conditions in Brazil are somewhat different in principle: from the 1990s the MST has increasingly turned from issues of class to gender and is big enough to create an impact. This attracts funding but real achievements in fact are more elusive (McKEON ET AL, 2004, p. 54). The differences across the three cases in this single issue demonstrate the complexity and subtlety required of South-South dialogue towards finding common ground and eliminating inherent problems.

## CONCLUSION

For South-South dialogue to develop and prosper, it is necessary to identify common concerns, to outline their histories and trajectories, and to set out terms by which they can be compared and contrasted. This enables a language of cooperation, resistance against shared expropriations under whatever façade they may be presented, and ways of discerning future conditions that may be no more salutary than past practices as engineered and implanted from abroad or imposed by wealthy elites upon the poorest and weakest. The way this idea has been developed here is by utilizing existing research from discrete fields such as history, political economy, comparative politics and agrarian politics in conjunction with journalism, interviews and field research from civil society movements. Thus, the theory, practice and purpose of MLAR have been elaborated on its own terms and against the findings of its critics. This in turn has shed light on the recent wave, between 2000 and 2010, of farmland investments across the Global South that have accounted for some 49 million hectares. That these investments have been undertaken by large countries of the Global South, like Brazil and South Africa is less important than two different ideas. One relates to the quality of information available about such deals, who and how it is reported, and how it can be collated continuously. Secondly, what common language obtains for South-South dialogue when primitive accumulation is exercised by the South upon its ostensible neighbours and allies? What, in other words, is to be made of the shared histories of exploitation and dependency when the leading states of the Global South appear effectively willing to do no better than ape their antecedents?

By tracing the contours of these relations and by considering resistance movements such as the MST, discourses from above and below, and the relegation of mandated land restitution, redistribution and the protection of marginalized communities, this paper establishes a base from which to elaborate on at least three further projects. One is the question across the Global South of participatory democracy within a broader South-South dialogue. A second area of attention is the meaning and focus of sovereignty across the Global South. The relative subjugation or subordination of states with shared histories and dependencies needs to become better understood, communicated, and entered into educational curricula and academic disseminations. Thirdly, a base is set for the current wave of MLAR, or land investments by outside interests, to reflect the condition of the democracies countries like the Philippines, Brazil and South Africa practice and promote. The role played by the form of MLAR that spread through the Global South at the turn of the millennium is beginning to be understood. It has yet to be properly documented and built into learning modules for the benefit of South-South dialogue and, as importantly, the dissemination of experience and knowledge from the South to the Global North.

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## RESUMO

O Mercado Conduzido pela Reforma Agrária (MLAR) evoluiu desde a década de 1990 como meio de redistribuição de terras entre compradores e vendedores dispostos dentro dos termos de apoio de financiadores externos e doadores. O debate sobre a eficiência e eficácia do projeto é altamente relevante para o diálogo Sul-Sul e a construção do conhecimento. Isso ocorre, em parte, porque o MLAR é um antecedente direto para a grande onda de investimentos em terras agrícolas, especialmente no Sul Global, desde 2000. Os críticos têm descrito os investimentos como a grilagem de terras neocolonialistas. Este artigo explora e descreve a história das questões fundiárias e agrárias em três importantes países de três continentes do hemisfério sul: Brasil, Filipinas e África do Sul. Os elementos relevantes do estudo são os tipos e métodos de mobilização de resistência e massa contra discursos de cima, que procuram impor as normas do mercado sobre a população rural pobre para quem tem terra de relevância não comercial. As semelhanças e diferenças derivadas desse exame são usadas para promover a divulgação de informações úteis e confiáveis no diálogo Sul-Sul, e para outras áreas ainda de investigação, tais como as questões de democracia, soberania e participação. Uma ideia relacionada é como a informação pode ser desenvolvida educacionalmente para transmitir a experiência e o conhecimento das relações agrárias no Sul Global para o Norte.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Mercado Conduzido pela Reforma Agrária. Comunicações globais sul. Resistência.

## ABSTRACT

Market-led Agrarian Reform (MLAR) has evolved since the 1990s as a means of redistributing land between willing buyers and willing sellers within the supporting terms of external lenders and donors. The debate over the efficiency and effectiveness of this project is highly relevant to South-South dialogue and knowledge building. This is partly because MLAR is a direct antecedent to the

large wave of investments in farmland, particularly in the Global South, since 2000. Critics have described the investments as neocolonialist land grabs. This paper explores and describes the history of land and agrarian issues in three important countries of three continents in the Global South: Brazil, the Philippines, and South Africa. Relevant elements of the study are the types and methods of resistance and mass mobilization against discourses from above that seek to impose the norms of the market on the rural poor for whom land has non-commodifiable significance. The commonalities and differences derived from this examination are used to consider the dissemination of useful and reliable information under South-South dialogue, and to further other areas of enquiry, such as the issues of sovereignty, democracy and participation. A related idea is how information can be developed educationally to transmit the experience and knowledge of agrarian relations in the Global South to the North.

**KEYWORDS:** Market-led Agrarian Reform. Global South communications. Resistance.