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Abstract
During the past 15 years, the Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT) has changed from a party with a mission of radical social transformation through democratic representation to a party which accepts and has integrated itself into the dominant political and economic regimes of the day. Concurrently, many social movements have come to depend on PT governments to express and successfully achieve their existential and program claims while others have abandoned their goals of social transformation for specific social programs which they call the “struggle for the possible”. The result is that social movements, in their relationship to the ruling national party, contribute to reproducing the structure of power, but concurrently open a political space for the excluded populations they represent. This article analyzes the relationship between social movements and political parties through a comparative study of three Brazilian social movements (São Paulo housing movement, the women's movement and the MST) and their relationship with the Workers’ Party since it gained power at the national level in 2003. It describes how these social movements participate in party politics, how their political strategy relates to overall movement goals and mission, how they interact with political parties during elections and if their political participation advances their claims.

Keywords
Social movements, political parties, political society, Brazil, Left, MST, housing movement, women’s movement, Workers’ Party.
Social Movements and Political Parties in Brazil: Expanding Democracy, the “Struggle for the Possible” and the Reproduction of Power Structures

Today Brazilian social movements are fully recognized political actors at all levels of government and present distributive social claims that favour the working classes through their involvement in grassroots mobilization, participative democratic processes and in party politics. During the past fifteen years most research on social movements and politics in Brazil has concentrated on different forms of participatory democracy and governance at the local level and as a result, until recently little has been written on the relation between social movements and political parties which has evolved during this period and is still a key part of social movement activity.

During the 1980s, the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores - PT) established a relationship with social movements that was considered ground breaking. Social movement rank and file across Brazil took part in the creation and development of the party which put into practice an organic and symbiotic relation between the two and subsequently broke with the traditional transmission belt model. The novelty of this grassroots, bottom up approach was that the PT, as the political expression of social movements, served to guarantee that their claims had a political vehicle in institutional politics. PT activists describe this relationship as "organic" that is, without being "officially" linked to each other, each organization pursues goals that complement each other and reinforce each other’s agenda (Guidry, 2003, 92). The party’s heterogeneity and formation from the “bottom-up” made it unique in the history of Brazilian parties (Keck, 1992). Hellman (1992, 55) describes this as an example of the incorporation of geographically or thematically isolated movements into a broader political mobilization around a program for comprehensive and even radical change.

Since then, the PT has gained significant power at all levels of government and this, along with other contextual and structural factors, has transformed its relation with social movements. Successive turns in (especially local) government throughout the 1990s transformed the PT (Baiocchi, 2004, 205). The PT governments integrated many of the movements’ demands into its government programs especially where these programs strengthened their electoral chances and where they did not conflict with neoliberal macro-economic policy. Consequently, many social movements have come to depend on PT governments to express and successfully achieve their existential and program claims while others have abandoned their goals of social transformation for specific social programs which they call the “struggle for the possible”. The result is that social movements in their relations with the ruling national party contribute to reproducing the structure of power, but concurrently open a political space for the excluded populations they represent.

This article analyzes the relationship between social movements and political parties through a comparative study of three Brazilian social movements and their relationship with the Workers' Party describing how these movements participate in party politics, how their political strategy relates to their overall movement goals and mission, how they
interact with political parties during elections and if their participation advances their claims.

**Conceptual Frame**

This article emphasizes the political nature of social movements through their engagement in party politics. Tarrow (1994) and Goldstone (2003, 2) argue that social movements are in constant interaction with the political system, both responding to it and altering it. The relationship that social movements maintain with political parties is a central part of their existence as movements play a mediating role between communities and political parties, serving as a conduit for the direct expression of popular claims (Alvarez and Escobar, 1992, 326-7). In the case of Brazilian social movements, there is a close integration between Leftist social movements and party politics which is important to recognize in order to understand the dynamics and trajectories of social movements. This is not a mechanical or linear relation, but must be understood as a complex interplay within movements and in movement – party alliances that create tensions within government – social movement relations. Within this context, Escobar and Alvarez (1992, 323) point out movements weave between ideological autonomy and political pragmatism, resistance and accommodation, protest and negotiation. This relation can help them advance in certain material claims but also constrain their larger missions of socio-economic and cultural transformation, possibly limiting their autonomy. Although participation in party politics does not necessarily mean abandoning opposition or all forms of contentious action (Goldstone, 2003, 4; Meyer and Tarrow, 1998, 23), the stance taken by political parties towards social movements can determine the approach and fate of social movements (Della Porta and Rucht, 1995; Kriesi, 1995).

Social movements are also shaped by political and institutional context, (Foweraker 1995, 64) and although Leftist political parties do not directly control social movements, the former do have an important influence on movement strategy, goals, and activities. Political institutions can also significantly constrain, mediate and impact the alternative political spheres where social movements engage (Alvarez and Escobar, 1992, 325). This article demonstrates that the type of relation a social movement maintains with a political party can alter the activities of that movement as well as at whom it aims its claims. This relation can especially influence a movement’s transition from tranngressional contention to contained contention (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2002). I understand that this is not the sole factor influencing social movements, but point out that it is an important if not overlooked one.

In addition, authors such as Veltmeyer and Petras (2009), Hunter (2007) and Samuels (2004) have observed that political and economic structures can restrain social movement mobilization and radicalism and political parties play a central role in this tendency indicating that social movements are conditioned by the political system and its institutions in which they participate. If they do not participate in the former, they risk being marginalized, not achieving claims and losing grassroots support. However, if they concentrate their efforts on institutional politics, they must "dance to the tune that's playing" which translates into substituting conflictual claims and methods for more conciliatory ones.
According to Petras and Veltmeyer (2009, 215-17), the social movement – party dynamics changes especially when the latter rises to power. If in opposition the movements lead or share power with the centre-left political parties because their main power resource is a large mass of mobilized people, which strengthens the position of the movements relative to electoral politicians. When parties come to power the relation is invariably reversed and social movements become subordinated to political parties and governments. They conclude that adopting electoral strategies, working within the framework of institutional politics and aligning with Centre-left regimes has weakened social movements and compromised their mission for social transformation. This partially supports Kriesi et al.’s (1995) hypothesis that the social movement mobilization depends, among other things, on whether their party allies are in or out of power.

The research presented in this article also aims at contributing to reflection on political society and parties within the context of a restructured state and an all important civil society. Political society serves as an interface between civil society and the state and it is thus important to recognize the role of political parties as a point of mediation. Social movements position themselves before governments based on their collective identity and ideological and political affinities with the political parties that make up these governments. Depending on their relationship with political parties, social movements can assume a more conciliatory or confrontational position with governments. Political parties can offer social movements more access to the state, its institutions and its resources or can use the state to repress opposition movements.

Although all recent studies (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009; Vanden, 2007; Fortes, 2009; Silva, Lima and Oliveira, 2010) of social movements and the PT federal government have focussed on the MST, I compare the MST with two other social movements: the housing movement and the women’s movement. There are few studies on the housing movement and practically no studies on the relation between the women’s movement and political parties. I chose these three movements because they are all national movements that originated during the same period, went through similar processes concerning their participation in politics; all three took part in the creation of the PT and are still active either directly or indirectly in its political campaigns and party organization and all actively participate in politics at all three levels of government (municipal, state and national). Finally, the actors involved are not homogenous, in that neither the PT nor the social movements themselves are monolithic entities and within them we find individuals and groups who differ in their views on politics and social change.

This comparative study is based on both primary data (interviews with movement leaders and PT activists in the cities of São Paulo and Brasilia in September 2010 and May 2011; and movement documents) and secondary literature around empirical studies of social movements and the PT. This article is organized along the following lines: description of the São Paulo housing movement, the MST and the São Paulo women's movement, an analysis of their relationship with the PT - within internal structures1, executive (when the PT is in power at a municipal, state or federal level), legislative (municipal councillors, state and federal deputies) and elections, and the changes that took place after 2003.
Social movements and the PT

São Paulo housing movement

This movement is territorially based and organized into several federations. In the city of São Paulo there are four different federated organizations: UMM (União do Movimento de Moradia - The Union of Housing Movements), CONAM (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Moradores - National federation of community associations), FLP (Frente de Lutas Populares - Popular Struggle Front), and MNLM (Movimento Nacional de Luta pela Moradia - National Movement for the Struggle for Housing). These social movement organizations (SMO) aggregate the majority of housing and urbanization movements in the city. My research concentrates on the UMM, the biggest of the SMOs.

The UMM was founded in 1987 and is organized from the bottom up through community organizations in different neighbourhoods of the city which make up teams in each sector of the city. Its mission involves sustaining democratic and autonomous grassroots organizations in specific areas of the city that defend the right to decent housing, to the city, and to the democratic elaboration of public policies that involve citizenship building. Its specific goals include supporting grassroots housing movements, deepening relations with different spheres of government while representing grassroots interests, connecting with likeminded popular movements and organizations and contributing to urban reform networks (UMM website, http://www.sp.unmp.org.br/ accessed on October 16, 2010). This movement is based on two different grassroots movements, one around isolated claims for water, for electricity and for access to land and the other concerned about collective occupations and organized actions of community associations who demand participation, autonomy in negotiations, control over construction, and self-management of housing co-operatives (Doimo, 1995). The first corresponds to populations already established and struggling to defend their homes as a right. The second involves evicted populations dwelling in inner city slums, shantytowns or precarious housing.

This movement traditionally uses four principal strategies to achieve their goals: physical occupation of lots and buildings, popular education, and a mixture of political and legal recourse and public demonstrations. To obtain more efficient results from the state and keep abreast of urban projects, at the end of the 1980s movement leaders concentrated their efforts on negotiating with city hall representatives. These leaders also followed up on neighborhood projects and worked with outside agents who became ever more necessary for understanding governmental bureaucracy and legal procedures (Gohn, 1991). As more time was spent negotiating and planning urban projects with the state, less time went into developing grassroots actions involving direct participation of members and sympathizers (Levy, 2005). Though the movement succeeded in strengthening its organization and presence in the social and institutional spheres, this change in resource allocation affected movement governance. It moved away from effective involvement in decision-making as grassroots participation became more representative.
At this time, many leaders became ‘professionals’, began to receive salaries and work full time for the movement. Daily relations between the grassroots and leaders became rarer as leaders spent more time outside the community. The democratic transition period saw the birth of a political space wherein the movements were called upon to establish a closer involvement with state powers (Feltran, 2010). At this time the UMM supported political parties and the constitutional process. These functions required not only mobilization but also a greater structuring as well as stronger theoretic and institutional support (Gohn, 1991). The Constitution opened a space within the decision-making spheres traditionally reserved for the political elite. The voices of excluded and marginalized populations were heard (Dagnino, 1994) and popular movements began to focus on legal, political and universal propositions.

Movement strategy and structure were determinants of social movement relations with the PT when the PT became the government’s executive. The housing movement collaborated with the PT when the PT candidate Luiza Erundina was elected mayor in the 1989 election and when Martha Suplicy was elected mayor in 2000. The election of the PT to municipal government was considered an important victory for most popular movements, but this situation also created challenges for the UMM. In the 2001 administration, movement leaders held important positions which seriously limited the autonomy of the movement. One important problem involved the new attitude of the UMM towards PT municipal administrations, which became one of extreme tolerance or cooptation in the sense that incorporated challengers modified their demands, tactics and even strategies so that these “can be pursued without disrupting the normal practice of politics” (Meyer and Tarrow 1998, 21). Leaders A and D admit that the movement went through a period of cooptation and as a result little was accomplished in terms of the construction of popular housing during the Suplicy administration.5

Leaders of this movement also held important positions in the Ministry of Cities created by the first Lula administration. Other than assuming government positions, the movement participated in urban management councils, thematic conferences and lobbies specific agencies and ministries to elaborate, implement and evaluate housing programs. In the 1988 PT São Paulo municipal administration and in the 2008 PT national program "Minha casa, minha vida" (My house, my Life) the movement was also involved in the implementation of housing programs.

The São Paulo UMM has been involved in the PT's internal structures since its foundation. Many of its leaders display a dual activism between the party and the movement, traditionally supporting the certain groups and currents within the PT. Several leaders consider that this is an important way to advance movement interest in government and to stay abreast of new developments concerning urban and housing affairs. Concerning the relation with members of legislative branch, the housing movement supports specific candidates to run as PT candidates in elections and then campaigns for them in neighbourhoods where they have a grassroots following. Several movement leaders have also ran as PT candidates at all levels of government, but as of yet none have been elected. Movement leaders also work for movement oriented deputies and city councillors in their cabinets once they are elected. These leaders receive a salary
and in some cases the deputies or city councillors will contribute funds to the movement to pay its leaders' salaries. In general, there is an exchange between the movement and elected members of the legislative branch in terms of resources and representation of interests.

**Women's movement**

Like the housing movement, the women's movement originated in the 1970s. It was influenced by the American feminist movement as well as the modernization of Brazilian society which created a new context for women of all classes. Many feminists began their activism in Leftist and progressive Catholic groups and eventually formed their own organizations when their claims around gender issues were not taken seriously by their male comrades. However, contrary to their European and North American counterparts, the Brazilian women's movement did not completely sever its ties with popular Leftist movements and political parties and maintained the goal of a broader social transformation that involved the rights of women (Molyneux, 2003, p. 269). During the 1980s, middle class feminists began working with groups of working class women in community associations and other social movements claiming daycare and spearheading other material claims such as water, electricity, transportation and health services in poor and low income neighbourhoods. The feminist movement proliferated through these popular groups and brought to the forefront new issues such as reproductive rights, violence against women and sexuality (Marques-Pereira and Raes, 2005).

The return to electoral politics changed the dynamics of this movement as its leaders integrated themselves into political parties in order to advance their claims. This movement began to see the state not as purely punitive and authoritarian but as a means to influence society through laws, social and economic policy and regulatory mechanisms concerning public culture and communication - all fundamental elements in the transformation of the feminine condition (Molyneux, 2003, p. 68). The Women's movement is similar to the housing movement in that many activists participate within movement structures as well as within their own organizations. During the 1980s the PT created a women's commission within the party that helped the party elaborate feminist platforms especially for election campaigns. An important part of the movement's agenda was subsequently used by the party. However, different from other socialist parties (such as the PCdoB), the PT feminists decided early on that the PT should not have its own women's organization outside the party (Godinho, 1998, 19). As with the other movements, the women's movement participated actively in the Constitution process as a "lipstick lobby" and through female deputies of all parties it achieved 80% of its claims (Soares, 1994). At this point, the women's movement became a consolidated force that diffused its ideals in society and wove relations with parties and other movements.

During the 1990s and 2000s, the organization of this movement changed as its leaders became professional. Many founded feminist NGOs in order to influence public policy and capture funds from international agencies. This also implied that the movement's organization became more top-down as it responded more to funding agencies than to its grassroots (Sarti, 2001). The movement was mainly organized through feminist NGOs.
who worked with women leaders in popular movements (urban, rural, trade union, health, education, Afro-Brazilian movement, etc.) through projects financed by international agencies.

During the 2000s, the women's movement rebuilt its ties with the grassroots through the World Women's March. This organization attempted to reach out to women leaders in other social movements (including the two mentioned in this article) and to mobilize women at the grassroots around specific women's claims. It also contested neoliberal macro-economics (Nobre and Farias, 2003) by linking neoliberal politics to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions for working class women. Although this particular organization is more grassroots than many feminist NGOs, some of its leaders are also members of the PT and others maintain ties to this party.

It is interesting to note the difference in organizational structure between this "new social movement" and the other two material and territorial based social movements. All three movements are represented nationally in size and membership. Nonetheless, the women's movement can be characterized by a large number of small associations and NGOs with very diverse agendas, that in Molyneux's (1998, 188, 223-4) opinion can cumulative constitute a women's movement. This movement does not have a single organizational expression and is characterized by a diversity of interests, forms of expression, and spatial location. As it has no central co-ordination and no agreed agenda, the extent of participation and its overall significance suggest that the women's movement often takes a more diffuse and decentralized form wherein independent women's organizations with their own goals and institutional autonomy choose to form alliances with other political organizations with which they are in agreement on a range of issues.  

Although this can be an effective means of securing concrete agendas for reform or change, according to Molyneux (1998, 228) it does run the risk of co-optation that results in the loss of agenda-setting capacity. However, its activist participation in PT administrations did not imply an explicit cooptation of the movement because it is more horizontal and dispersed than other movements. Still, interviews with feminist activists G and L reveal that while the participation of leaders in government improves the movement's influence on public policies, it reduces room for critical debate. According to Godinho (1998, 25) at the municipal level this influence rarely translates into a secretary taking on policies aimed at women.

Concerning elections, the women's movement also campaigns within the party to support feminist PT candidates and support their campaigns. This movement has successfully influenced the PT to implement both an internal and candidate quota for women and this has created numerous women PT leaders and candidates in recent years. As with the housing movement, several movement activists work in deputy cabinets, but once again this does not subordinate the movement to the party, given its organizational nature with no central coordination. Contrary to the housing movement, the movement organizations do not receive any resources. Movement leaders G and J believe that this interaction has strengthened the movement and moved several of its claims into legislation.
The MST began in the context of an important wave of peasant mobilizations during the early 1980s in the South of Brazil and through the organization of the Pastoral Land Commission, an organization dating back to the mid-1970s that belongs to the Brazilian Catholic Church. Its goals were immediate access to land for landless families through nonviolent occupation of unproductive land; and national agrarian reform including both the redistribution of land and the creation of policies that would develop and sustain rural families (Fernandes, 2000). During this period, the MST saw the state and large landowners as its main adversaries and used land occupations and marches as its main repertoire to denounce police repression and neoliberal reform as an elitist anti-agrarian reform project (Galdino, 2005). The MST decided not to revolve around institutional politics, but expand its organization throughout the country in settlements and occupation camps by investing heavily in its cooperatives and in educating its members both technically and politically. Through the establishment of rules and organizational mechanisms the MST avoided propelling its leaders to power, stimulating private ownership and the desire to become well off professionals distant from the people they represent.

The MST is territorially organized around settlements which elect a coordination team. This team elects representatives to a regional team which in turn elects representatives to a state team which elects a representative to a national elected body. Each level also elects representatives to different sectors (education, health, gender, production, communication.) The MST sees itself not simply as a political end, but also as a cultural means. It invests heavily in the training of its base and leadership to deal not only with institutional politics and technical knowledge but also to foster socialist ideals (Stedile and Fernandes, 1999). This emphasis on ideology pushed the MST to support other social forces that faced de-articulation and fragmentation in their social and leadership structure (Chaves, 2000). During the late 1990s, the MST acknowledged that the PT was no longer a force to agglutinate individual struggles around a strategy for social transformation and serve as the ideological engine to different popular movements across the country. It was also at this time that the MST became a leading force for all social movements as it organized mobilizations and demonstrations against the neoliberal politics of the federal government and was called upon by other social movements to participate in their mobilizations.

MST leaders are generally not involved in internal PT politics. Early on in the movement's history the MST delineated the lines between party and movement activism (Vergara-Camus, 2009, 185). If MST leaders wish to assume positions within the PT, they must leave their position in the MST. The MST does participate in the PT’s National Agrarian Secretary as an autonomous organization. The MST’s prevailing mode of action is grounded in a distinct form of social conflict described as public activism that involves an organized, politicized, visible, autonomous, periodic and non-violent form of social conflict (Carter, 2009, 25). Pressure tactics are usually preceded by a string of failed
petitions and frustrated negotiations with public officials. These activities can take place at various levels of government.

Another type of interaction with the Brazilian political system can be described as a loosely organized, non-hierarchal pattern of interest representation, offering various types of partnerships with the state. These associated networks involving movement and NGO activists, elected officials and government civil servants have facilitated different points of access to public resources and participation in selective policy-making bodies (Carter, 2009, 27-8; Wolford, 2010). Over the years, the MST has signed a number of agreements with federal, state and local governments, to carry out a variety of development projects, notably in agriculture, education, culture and public health. In addition, MST representatives have participated in various government and local administration commissions. After the 1998 election of Governor Olivio Dutra in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the MST was invited by the PT administration to direct the state’s land reform bureau, but decided not to accept. Over the years, the MST has developed an internal norm that its leaders must leave their position in the MST if they wish to assume a position in any government. As a result very few have done so. This does not mean that the MST is cut off from governments as many of its allies from NGOs, the Church or academia have assumed positions at different levels of the Lula government and the MST has been called upon to contribute to policies. Through these internal rules, the MST has been able to distinguish between its own mission and goals and that of the PT and its governments.

Concerning elected representatives, the MST does campaign for PT candidates who identify with its cause. In the late 1980s, the PT created an Agrarian Nuclei among its deputies. In Rio Grande do Sul, the MST elected a five-term PT federal deputy and a string of PT representatives to the state assembly. While both associations shared many members, they have historically run their organizations in an autonomous way. This offers a space for dialogue and policy formulation that brings together PT officials, MST representatives, rural trade union leaders, and spokespersons from other progressive civil society organizations. In times of need, PT officials have customarily provided support for MST activists (Carter, 2009, 28). They also defend the MST and agrarian reform in the deputies’ chambers and keep the MST abreast of events concerning agrarian reform. MST leaders P and Q consider this interaction with PT essential in their struggle with large landowners and the agro-business sector which also have their own group of deputies. Different from the housing movement, the MST leaders do not work in deputies' cabinets nor does the movement receive any resources from deputies.

Although the MST has traditionally made a conscious effort to maintain its identity and independence, its relation with the PT government has still managed to polarize and divide the movement as demonstrated in an open letter written by several Via Campesina movement leaders who left the movement in October 2011. Some MST activists feel that while the MST has achieved important subsidies from the federal government and repression has decreased (Chaguaceda, and Brancaleone, 2010), many leaders are now more interested in administrating government funded projects than organizing land occupations. In addition, the MST funding structure changed when in 2005 the movement
decided that assentados (the landless who have received their plot of land and live in MST settlements) would no longer have to contribute part of their earnings to fund land occupations and instead the movement would use administrative fees on their government projects to fund the movement. This eventually backfired when in 2004 the agro-business lobby and their elected officials launched a campaign and official inquiries (Estadão, 2009) against the MST accusing them of misappropriation of government funds. The investigations that ensued paralyzed part of the movement’s activities for at least 5 years.

**Social movement-PT relations during the 2003-2010 period**

The election of Lula as president was thought of as the turning point by social movements and the Left in general when social transformation would take place at a more intensive pace. It was considered the apogee of 30 years of struggle and popular mobilization (Silva, Lima and Oliveira, 2010, 139). Throughout the period of democratic transition and consolidation, social movements prioritized building and supporting the PT’s party organization, assuming that the party could and would carry their agenda forward if it could just reach national power (Hochstetler, 2008, 34). Social movements and the Left in general had great expectations of this government: greater participation and influence in and on government and a socialist government program that would accelerate social transformation.

Hochstetler describes in detail how over Lula's first term, initial civil society approval gave way to a growing sense of disappointment with how the Lula and the PT governed Brazil (Hochstetler, 2008, 33). She describes three phases of the PT government - civil society relation where first, civil society used its mobilizing power to support Lula and nudge him closer to their shared historical agenda. In this phase, social movements saw the PT government as a disputed space between the right/traditional ruling elite and the Left/working classes and their strategy was to put pressure on the process of public policy decision making through a combination of institutional insertion and mobilization/contention. This insertion took place in three ways: accepting positions in government, taking part in participative processes put in place by the government around the formulation of public policy, and the establishment of partnerships between movements and government around the formulation, operationalization and/or evaluation of public policies (Silva, Lima and Oliveira, 2010, 141-2).

During the second phase CSOs began to doubt they shared a political project with the PT's national administration. They began to separate from the PT organizationally and to express doubts about the value of participating in the administration's consultative processes. Following a wave of protests and both urban and rural occupations in June/July 2003, social movements and sectors of the CUT created the Coordination of Social Movements in August 2003 to pressure the government and strategize without the PT in a constructed space used to reiterate socialist ideals and coordinate collective actions and criticisms of the government. In 2005, during the third phase, CSOs, still reluctant to take strong negative stands against the administration, formulated new critiques of representative democracy and party politics but still supported Lula.
(Hochstetler, 2008, 33-4; 49) while sceptically continuing to interact with the representative democratic sphere (Hochstetler, 2008, 51). Throughout the two mandates of the PT national government, social movements continued to support the PT and to put their faith in procedural opportunities for participation in government as they were seen as additional channels for expressing citizen input that could supportively pressure the Lula government and thus overcome more elitist political forces (Hochstetler, 2008, 42). Social movements worked on several fronts in relation to politics and to the PT (party and government). On some fronts (such as the Social Movement Coordinatora) they took a more oppositional and independent stance whereas on other fronts, (in the party, with deputies and with the executive) they were more dependent, less vocal and more conciliatory. In general, social movements did not mobilize themselves against government policies when their allies were involved either because they participated directly or indirectly in these governments, or because that government was attending to the movement's claims. In addition, the movements wanted to avoid weakening their political allies who were faced with antagonist opponents and, if back in power, would use violence to repress the very same social movements.

The MST in some ways holds a distinct position from the other two social movements. The PT’s victory in the presidential election of 2002 and decision to uphold many of Cardoso’s economic and rural policies led the MST to waiver on its alliance with the PT. The movement’s disappointment with Lula’s policies were initially tempered by the MST’s pragmatic decision to side with the PT’s Left and attack the government’s neoliberal economic policies, while sparing President Lula himself (Carter, 2009). The MST exercised what Vanden (2007) calls critical distance from the ruling PT national government during the first PT mandate. In addition, the MST does not participate in PT directories, in their governments or in the cabinets of deputies and senators. But they do have close relationships with deputies and senators, and they do negotiate with the executive at all levels. Their relationship with elected officials is more strategic and instrumental than urban and women's movements who have more intense affinities with PT governments. The MST however, does support PT and other Leftist party candidates. Although relations between the two organizations at the local level are generally excellent, with overlapping affiliations, the national leaderships have remained separate and not always cordial (Fortes, 2009). While the MST has maintained a militant line with regard to the need to take over unused land and assert its agenda, much of the PT leadership has wanted to be more conciliatory (Vanden, 2007, 28-9).

Concerning elections, all three movements support PT candidates (presidential, senate, governor and deputies). For example, at the state level in São Paulo, during the 2010 elections all movement participated in an 18 month process of elaborating the PT state government candidate’s platform and publically declared their support for Mercadante, the PT governor candidate (who subsequently lost out to the centre-right party PSDB). The housing and women's movement supported specific candidates who represented their causes. The MST supported several candidates because they considered it more strategic to spread their support out than only supported a limited number of candidates. In
general, all movements consider their relation with deputies important given that they
often represent the more Leftist and pro-movement elements within the PT. All three
parties supported the PT presidential candidate in the 2010 elections in both rounds.
Activists of the housing and women's movement took an active role in this campaign by
rounding up the grassroots for public rallies and visits to poor neighbourhoods. Several
MST leaders admitted that they would vote for the PSOL presidential candidate (in the
first round), but would not campaign for him because the grassroots of the MST
supported the PT candidate.

Changes in the PT and social movements

Throughout the descriptions of these Brazilian social movements we witness an
important trend over the last twenty years: their changing nature from contention to
institutionalization when social movement discourse and action have moved beyond the
sphere of civil society and into the state. Political and economic change in Brazil has
encouraged unions and social movements to adopt more pragmatic postures (Samuels,
2004, 6; Silva, Lima and Oliveira, 2010, 152) that involve negotiation of social public
programs with all types of government and a reduction of social protest and grassroots
mobilization. Social movement participation in institutional spaces throughout the 1990s
and 2000s led to many movements abandoning or reducing collective mobilization and
contention (Silva, Lima and Oliveira, 2010, 141). In the end, this has led many social
movements to accept working within the confines of the political and economic regimes
and to no longer openly question them or work towards a social utopia.

However, certain analysts such as Dagnino (1998) believe that social movements have
advanced a conception of democracy that transcends the limits both of political
institutions as traditionally conceived and of actually existing democracy. The
operationalization of the concept of democracy is tied to the notion of citizenship and
rights. This implies accepting political institutions and the state but also a radical claim
for their transformation which includes abandoning the predominant strategies of political
organization such as favoritism, clientalism and tutelage (Dagnino, 1998, 47-49). Many
social movements (excluding the Via Campesina movements) believe that the most
important way to work towards regime change is within the political system and for that
reason they place most of their resources in either partnerships with allied governments
or governance structures with those and other governments. For example, in the three
cases we studied the women’s movement gained parity within the party, as well as a
ministry in government, but lost out on reproductive and abortion issues; the MST gained
government supported programs, but lost on government adoption of the agro-business
model; and the urban movement gained a national housing program, but lost on urban
infrastructure issues.

Most analyses of the relation between the PT and social movements focus on how the PT
has changed subsequent to forming a government at the national level and how this has
consequently changed its relation with civil society. There is a consensus in the literature
that the PT has changed from a party with a mission of radical social transformation
through democratic representation to a party which accepts and has integrated itself into
the dominant political and economic regimes of the day (Anderson, 2011). There is also some consensus around what made the PT change its nature and mission. Most agree that over twenty years of experience and practice in government - with over two hundred terms at the municipal level – has led the PT to abandon its socialist nature (Baiocchi, 2004, 207). The need to provide “results” as opposed to merely criticizing the government as an opposition party in the legislature influenced PT party members and encouraged strategic moderation. They gradually moderated their views after serving in government (Samuels, 2004, 12). The years of experience in executive and legislative branches of the state led PT politicians to adapt to the norms of these political institutions and their political practices (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2009, 218) as they adjusted to a political system and culture they once criticized and aimed at transforming.

Hunter goes event further to assert that the PT eventually succumbed to pressures stemming from two sources: the international political economy and Brazil’s political institutions (Hunter, 2007, 442). During the 1980s institutional action (participation in elections, taking on positions in government) was seen as a means to strengthen the Left and bring about social change. During the 1990s, within the PT this became an end in itself (Silva, Lima and Oliveira, 2010, 140). As the PT lost its character as a movement, its evolution no longer depended primarily on this once central disposition (Samuels, 2004, 16). Especially since its election to the federal government in 2003, the PT represents and mediates the claims of competing classes and groups and does not considers itself a workers’ government.

Most observers of the PT agree that the changes that have taken place in the relationship between the PT and social movements dates back to the early 1990s when the PT began occupying more municipal governments and social movements became more institutionalized at the local level (Baiocchi, 2004). The PT’s rise to executive office first at the local level and more recently at the national level facilitated many social movements’ approximation to the state (Samuels, 2004, 13) as many PT administrations staffed offices with social movement leaders. In turn, this permitted leaders to work within the government on issues they formerly tried to influence from outside. This recruitment offers both advantages and disadvantages to social movements. They are close to the center of power and able to make decisions, but also find themselves limited by budgetary and bureaucratic constraints that often divide them from those still outside (Hochstetler, 2004, 11). In many cases, the migration of leaders to government also weakened the ranks and organizations of movements.

Despite the fact that social movement leaders occupy positions in the party and in government, Hunter (2007, 31) recognizes that the party has ceased to provide the institutionalized mechanisms of political influence that it once did for various social movements. Social movements have little influence on PT government platforms, on the alliances that the PT constructs to succeed electorally and sustain its government, and on macro-economic policy. The relations of reciprocity established during the 1980s between the party and popular movements were gradually replaced by more traditional relations where the popular movements were considered to be at the service of the party, now deemed to be the central actor of implementing change. The PT concentrates on its
own political interests and less on those of popular movements and their grassroots. At the same time divisions between diverging ideological and political currents within the PT and the CUT around the issue of institutionalization become more visible. Divisions have also emerged between the MST national movement leadership and grassroots as the former has at times had to order the latter to “tone it down.”

Conclusion: Walking the tightrope

Party politics are a central element of many social movements. Recognizing this can help better comprehend the relations that social movement forge with the state. The relationship that social movements establish with political parties depends on the political regime as well as their own structures, goals and identities. Social movement discourse and collective action can be influenced by relations with political parties and governments. Social movements are political actors that cannot be ignored and must be dealt with by governments, whether these movements are allies or enemies. In Latin America, although Leftist governments have devised mechanisms of coordination so that the movements themselves participate in the design of social public policies and are involved in the implementation of local policies, Zebechi (2010) feels that most Latin American social movements are not strong enough to resist becoming sucked into bureaucratic institutions and cannot overcome state dependency and subordination (Zibechi, 2010, online).

It is important to place the state – political society – civil society relation in a historical context of elite political domination. Bethell (2000, 16) observes that throughout modern Brazilian history every change of political regime has demonstrated the extraordinary capacity of Brazilian elites to defend the status quo and their own interests by controlling, co-opting, and, if necessary, repressing the forces in favour of radical social change. In this case the PT ruling alliance, with certain sectors of the traditional elite and its continuing relationship with social movements, has led to subduing these movements. In a similar line of thought, Silva, Lima and Oliveira (2010, 141-2) affirm that the Brazilian state has historically managed its relationship with society simultaneously through four modes: clientelism, corporatism, bureaucratic isolation and the universalism of procedure. The PT government is no exception. The difference is that this party opens institutional spaces to new actors who are considered legitimate representatives of historically excluded sectors of society.

In this study, all three movements maintain relations with the PT at different levels and in different spaces and have won spaces of influence within the state through the PT. This has helped them elaborate and carry out policies and programs in favour of the grassroots groups they represent, but all have recognized that they have no influence on macro-economic policy and there is little room for critical debate between social movements and the PT. The housing and the women’s movement are the closest to the PT, but this has a different effect on each movement because of its distinct organizational structures. In both cases however, their dual activistisms at times blur the lines between the social movement and the party even though there are no official ties between them. The MST is different from the other two movements in that the latter's relation with the PT is
considered tactical - a means to advance the movement's struggle. There is a certain awareness within the MST of this complex relation that simultaneously advances and constrains their struggle.

Although there are notable differences between these social movements, they have all accepted the strategies and goals of political party allies because they consider that they have little or no sway in certain areas such as who the PT chooses as running mate party or macro-economic issues or how certain policies are carried out. They consider that it is better to have an ally in power that concedes to some of their demands and dialogues with them rather than an antagonist who refuses any dialogue and marginalizes or even physically represses them. The movements in this study are walking a tightrope, allying themselves with the PT in opposition and government, but criticizing the state and regime policies from civil society. Contention is no longer the only means and thus social movements work to create new spaces to regroup the Left. The relations that social movements establish and maintain with political parties are complex and full of contradictions and tensions. They offer material gains, but may contribute to movement institutionalization and demobilization, thereby indicating that having political allies in government can simultaneously advance and constrain social movement claims and mobilization.

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1 The PT is considered a mass party with highly formalized and institutionalized processes of decision-making and leadership elections. At all levels, the rank-and-file have many opportunities to participate in party deliberations and manifest their preferences. Dissidence is permitted and institutionalized through different internal groups and currents (Samuels, 2004, 9-10).
2 Each sector elects a representative which represents it at the city level, which in turn elects a group of representatives at the state level which then elects a group of representatives at the national level.
3 This aims at changing the habits of individuals in order to create a collective understanding of city living and a sense of citizenship to motivate individuals into taking action to claim their rights.
4 In the 1980s many of these agents came from the Catholic Church, but during the 1990s and 2000s most came from NGOs.
5 Interviewed in September 2010.
6 Excluded from this definition are all forms of `state-linked mass organizations for women, women's branches of political parties, trade unions and other organizations of civil society that are not primarily organised to advance women's gender specific concerns' (Alvarez, 1990: 23).
7 Some dissident voices within the MST state that certain leaders have endured at the national and intermediate levels (Interviews with 2 past sector coordinators, September 2011).
8 For this reason it launched the Consulta Popular to regroup Leftist forces outside of the party and create a socialist alternative to capitalist society.
9 Some of these candidates have come from MST leadership and others have come from allied organizations. The former run and serve as individuals not as representatives of the MST (Vergara-Camus, 2009, 186).
10 In this letter, over 50 leaders accuse the MST of becoming dependent on the state, abandoning trangression forms of contention so as to not destabilize the PT government despite numerous policies against MST interests (government investment in agro-business, the legal approval of genetically modified crops and the expansion of the agricultural border towards the Amazon region).
11 Early on in the first PT mandate the Left split when PT deputies left the party to form a new party, the PSOL (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade).
12 In 2005, the mensalão scandal broke out tarnishing the PT’s reputation among social movements and the larger public demonstrating that the PT is no more ethical than traditional ruling elite parties. Following this scandal the PT embarked upon a new effort to strengthen ties with its traditional movement allies.
13 Although Hochstetler stresses broadly shared positions of CSOs because Brazilian CSOs are inclined to organize themselves into temporary or permanent networks plan collective action (Hochstetler, 2008, 39),
I see a fundamental difference we see a fundamental difference between social movements and NGOs in terms of representation, governance and composition.

However, according to an interview with an ex-member of the MST national coordination, it did participate for four years in the PT national directory during the 1990s.

This included expanding its alliances to include the middle classes in order to enlarge its electoral base and increase its possibilities to win future elections.

Interview with dissent ex-MST member in September 2011.

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