Dynamics of agrarian transformation and resistance

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Abstract

The paper analyses in the Latin American context the dynamics associated with the capitalist development process, namely, the productive and social transformation of an agrarian society and economy into a modern industrial capitalist system. This process implies a process of primitive accumulation (separation of the direct producers from the land) and the proletarianization of the peasantry. The project of development with international cooperation was designed and serves to assist the dispossessed rural poor in adjusting to the forces of progressive change released in the process, rather than resisting them. The paper also deals with the resistance of the rural landless workers and other elements of the peasantry against the neoliberal model of capitalist development that threatens the viability and sustainability of their livelihoods.

Keywords: Capitalist development, agrarian change, peasants, proletarianization, resistance, social movements.

Resumo

Dinâmicas da transformação agrária e resistência

O artigo analisa, no contexto da América Latina, as dinâmicas associadas com o processo de desenvolvimento capitalista, ou seja, a transformação produtiva e social de economias e sociedades agrárias em sistemas capitalistas modernos. Isso implica em um processo de acumulação primitiva (separação dos produtores diretos da terra) e a proletarização dos camponeses. O projeto de desenvolvimento com cooperação internacional foi desenhado e serve para subsidiar os pobres rurais os ajustando às forças de mudança progressiva, e não resistindo a elas. O artigo também trata da resistência de trabalhadores sem-terra e outros componentes do campesinato contra o desenvolvimento do modelo neoliberal de capitalismo que ameaça a viabilidade e a sustentabilidade de seus estabelecimentos.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento capitalista, mudança agrária, camponeses, proletarização, resistência, movimentos sociais.

Resumen

Dinámicas de la transformación agraria y resistencia

El articulo analiza en contexto de América Latina las dinámicas involucrado en el proceso de desarrollo capitalista, es decir, la transformación productiva y social, que implica la separación de los campesinos de la tierra y su proletarización - la transformación en un proletariado. El proyecto de desarrollo con cooperación internacional fue inventado a propósito de asegurar que los campesinos y los pobres del campo se ajuste a las fuerzas de cambio en vez de resistirlas. El articulo tratan tanto las dinámicas de la transformación como los asociados con su resistencia al modelo neoliberal en su esfuerzo de proteger y asegurar la sustentabilidad de su modo de vivir.

Palabras clave: Desarrollo capitalista, transformación agraria, campesinos, proletarización, resistencia, movimientos sociales.

Introduction

The capitalist development of the forces of production is associated with a process of productive and social transformation that includes the separation of the direct producers from their means of production, (dispossession of the peasantry of small-scale farmers), and their conversion into a proletariat, available for hire and forced to migrate to the cities in search of alternative more sustainable forms of livelihood and employment opportunities. This proletarianization process has been characterized by some (David Harvey, for example) as 'primitive accumulation by dispossession'. However, the structural and political dynamics of 'primitive accumulation' is only one side of the process. On the other side are the dynamics of resistance against this development - a class struggle against the capitalist development of agriculture - and a struggle for 'genuine agrarian reform' or social transformation. On this side can be found the diverse class- and community-based political organizations formed in the popular sector of society, and here none are as important as the peasantry and landless rural workers who have led the fight - the long class war - against the most recent incursion of capitalism in the countryside, defending an economy of small scale agricultural production and demanding the redistribution of land from the ravages of capitalist development.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the virulence of the capitalist land concentration has led generations of analysts to argue that there is no defence - that the forces of capitalist concentration are so strong as to extinguish alternative modes of production and bring about the demise of the peasantry as a socioeconomic and political formation. This argument has waxed and waned over the years, with a high point in the 1970s and then again in the last few years as another cycle in the process of capitalist concentration subjected the peasantry to the new world order of neoliberal globalization. Once again the 'disappearance of the peasantry' is on the agenda of scholarly debate and politics.

The policies of neoliberal globalization have given a new impetus to the forces of capitalist development and agrarian transformation. But this time the protagonists of an ongoing scholarly and political debate about the fate of the peasantry include the peasants themselves in the form of radical social movements as well as international organizations such as *Via Campesina*, formed for the purpose of confronting the dominant neoliberal model and constructing a new agrarian order based on co-operatives, family farms and self managed agro-industrial complexes.

This paper argues that far from disappearing into the dustbin of history advanced is that the repressive policies of imperial-backed neoliberal states weakened labour, decimating the forces of resistance within the working class. However, under the same conditions the mass of landless or near-landless rural workers, constituting a rural semi-proletariat, managed to resist the latest incursions of capitalism and imperialism in the countryside and in some cases went on the offensive to topple the most egregious neoliberal regimes (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005). In the 1990s these rural movements, with their social base in the popular sector rather than civil society, in the peasant organizations and indigenous communities, led the resistance against neoliberalism and even succeeded in overthrowing several important client regimes of the Empire.

The peasant struggle for land and rural livelihoods continues and has imposed political limits on the capitalist transformation of rural society. The strategic response of the peasantry - both indigenous and non-indigenous - to the latest onslaught of capitalism is a strategy of direct action and the mobilization for land occupations and state supported land reform.

An important part of this strategy is the links forged between the peasant movements and the urban-based social organizations in the popular sector and the middle-class organizations of the so-called 'civil society' of non-governmental organizations. Not that

these rural-urban links, which have both a structural and political dimension, are entirely benign. In fact, they constitute a double-edged sword, working as much to demobilize the popular movement as to advance it.

The 'great transformation' and the strategic response of the peasantry

At the centre of the process of capitalist development, represented theoretically in the historical narratives of industrialization, modernization and capitalist development, is the conversion of the direct producers on the land - 'peasants' - into a mass of rural landless and migrant workers, an urban proletariat of informal workers, a rural semi-proletariat of small-scale producers forced to combine direct production with wage labour, and a 'lumpen proletariat' affiliated to the burgeoning narcotics sector as producers, traders and security enforcers.

Under current conditions of this 'great transition' - that is, within the new world order of imperial centred neoliberal globalization - peasants are 'on the move' in three senses. One is at the level of spatial relocation - migration from diverse rural localities and communities to the city. The dynamics of this response to the forces of capitalist concentration, centralization, dispossession, proletarianization are everywhere in evidence, manifest in the uprooting and displacement from the countryside of huge numbers of landless producers and their families. The vast majority of these rural migrants are absorbed into the urban economy at the level of work or economic activity as a mass of informal workers, working 'on their own account' on the streets, rather than for wages in industrial plants and factories, in private and public sector offices, or in transportation or construction. Within the 'informal' sector, the most dynamic and lucrative growth area is in the narcoeconomy, which is, according to 60% of Mexican poor youth (in a recent official survey), the 'most viable economic activity' for them in the country (*La Jornada*, March 2010). These rural migrants and landless workers are incorporated into the urban economy in the burgeoning growth of barrio organizations linked to competing popular and elite patronage networks.

Migration is one response of the rural proletariat to the forces of social change generated in the capitalist development process. Another is labour - to exchange labour-power for a living wage. Responses along this line, a matter of individual decision rather than collective action, are reflected in the resulting process of social transformation, which for peasants has meant entering into a relation of labour under whatever conditions are available. This response has resulted in the formation of a semi-proletariat with links to both the land and wage-labour, allowing 'peasants' to secure the livelihood of their households, and, at a different level, to constitute what Marx in a different context termed an 'industrial reserve army' of workers whose labour is held in reserve without capital having to assume the costs of its reproduction.

A third response of peasants assumes a 'political' rather than 'structural' form (the outcome of economic decisions made by countless individuals), which is to join the social movements as a means of organizing and mobilizing the resistance against the processes of primitive accumulation and proletarianization - against forced migration and the subsumption of labour, the loss of livelihood, the policies of the neoliberal state and its governing body.

The dynamics of social transformation

This process of structural change and productive transformation over the years can be traced out easily enough in the ebb and flow of academic debate between those who argue that the incessant trend towards proletarianization will bring about the disappearance of the peasantry, and those who argue the contrary, that the peasantry, albeit reduced in number, rather than disappearing is being reproduced in different forms. This issue was at the centre of a debate between 'peasantists' such as Gustavo Esteva (1983) and 'proletarianists' such as Roger Bartra (1976) in the 1970s (Nugent, 1994). After a lapse of some years as political sociologists turned their attention and lens to the 'new social

movements' of the 1980s, the peasantist-proletarianist debate has resumed in an era of neoliberal globalization in which the forces of modernization, industrialization and capitalist development have worked to accelerate a process of agrarian transformation.

The brutal effects and painful consequences of this process are reflected in the detritus of grinding poverty left behind in the countryside. In a sense, both sides of the argument regarding the process of the capitalist development and agrarian transformation are supported by some of the 'facts' and thus able to explain some of the changes taking place across the Latin American countryside. This is because, under conditions of what some have conceptualized as 'peripheral capitalism', the peasantry is being transformed but not completely so, converted and reproduced in different form in a process that we might conceptualize as 'semi-proletarianization'.

Rather than the 'disappearance of the peasantry' we have its reproduction in diverse but identifiable and, in some contexts, sustainable forms. Peasants under these conditions appear as a rural proletariat of landless workers forced to combine direct production on the land with wage-labour - working off-farm to secure the livelihood of their households and families; and an urban proletariat in the informal sector of the urban economy, to work 'on their own account' and live in a 'planet of slums'.

There is nothing particularly 'new' here. The process can be traced out in the dynamics of productive and social transformation all over the world in different spatial and historical contexts. What is perhaps different or distinctive about this agrarian transformation in the current context of neoliberal globalization is that the process, as it were, has been 'stalled' in the formation of a semi-proletariat of rural landless workers forced into seasonal or irregular forms of wage-labour. Under these conditions, and taking into account the politics of resistance in the 1990s, there is no question of the peasantry disappearing into the dustbins of history.

Social change and the land question

The forces of social change associated with the process of agrarian transformation have always been resisted by organized groups on the receiving end of these forces - primarily direct producers on the land, i.e. 'peasants' as viewed in the academic literature (Otero, 1999) and by peasants themselves (Desmarais, 2007). Nowhere is this more evident than in Latin America.

In Latin America the tendency for different categories of 'peasant' to engage the struggle for land and social change was evident as early as the first twentieth century agrarian revolution - in Mexico. In this historic struggle, peasants - a good number located in marginalized indigenous communities - not only won the rights to large tracts of expropriated land but they constituted a watershed in peasant-state relations. In the wake of the Mexican Revolution, and then again in Cuba some forty years on, the state, under pressure for revolutionary change, tolerated partial land reform as a means of keeping the social peace and taming, if not settling, the class struggle for land. Under similar conditions but changed circumstances peasant movements emerged in the 1930s in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Brazil, and Peru.[1] In the Caribbean, rural workers, particularly sugar workers in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Guyana and elsewhere, also took up the struggle. In each case, with the exception of Mexico under Cardenas, repressive measures were taken by the state to suppress or destroy these rural 'rebellions'. In Mexico, agrarian reform was extended to hundreds of thousands of poor rural families (Katz, 1988).

In Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba, armed forces of the US imperial state and its anointed tyrant-presidents - Somoza, Trujillo, and Batista - slaughtered thousands, decimating the peasant and rural workers' movement. In Brazil, the state defeated Prestes' rural-based guerrilla army while pursuing a strategy of national

[1] See the relevant sections in the collections edited by Stavenhagen (1970), Landsberger (1974) and Roseberry, Gudmundson and Samper (1995).

industrialization. As for Chile, a Popular Front of radicals, socialists and communists encouraged - and then abandoned - the peasant struggle, together with demands for agrarian reform, in exchange for national state sponsored industrialization in a political agreement with the centre-left Radical Party.

In the most successful cases, peasant-based revolts or rebellions were able to secure institutional reforms in the agrarian sector. But these reforms usually followed a process of active mobilization and *de facto* land occupations. The government, in effect, was compelled to legalize the *status quo* as well as dampen pressures for more radical land redistribution. In Mexico, this process began in the early 1900s and reached its high point in the 1930s.

Subsequently, in the 1960s and 1970s, some government in the region used the repressive power of the state to alter the distribution of land for different categories of producers and households, and to redefine the right to land for those given 'improved access' in the process. This was the case no matter the ideological or political complexion of the regime. In 1952, for example, a revolution of miners and peasants in Bolivia led to a sweeping agrarian reform that resulted in the expropriation of many large estates. At the end of the decade, in Cuba, the victory of the 26th of July movement resulted in the confiscation of most of the American and Cuban-owned plantations, the land subsequently collectivized or distributed to smallholders (McEwan, 1981).

Land reforms also took place in Peru from 1958 to 1974, in Brazil from 1962 to 1964, in Chile from 1966 to 1973, Ecuador from 1964 to 1967, in Guatemala between 1952 and 1954 (and again after the civil war following the peace accords), Honduras in 1973, and Nicaragua, under different political conditions (a short-lived 'socialist' regime) from 1979 to 1986.[2] These reforms were led by the state, regardless of its form (authoritarian, military, liberal reformist, populist, socialist). They were undertaken in response to mass peasant mobilizations and a general threat of 'social revolution' (De Janvry, Sadoulet and Wolford, 1998).

These state-led land reforms were undertaken in tandem with a strategy of rural development that was designed as a means of appeasing the landless or near-landless rural poor and to dampen the fires of revolutionary ferment (the soft-glove of development) and a strategy of outright repression (the hard fist of armed force) against the rural poor who had taken up arms and joined the armed struggle. As for the strategy of rural development, pursued within the framework of the Alliance for Progress, the operational agency (or 'actor') was the 'private voluntary association', a middle-class form of nongovernmental organization (NGO) contracted in large numbers to prosecute the war against rural poverty on the front line of this war within the localities and communities of the landless and near-landless rural poor. On this front, divisions of PVOs (NGOs as they would later be termed) worked in tandem with *Acción Católica*, an agency set up by the Vatican to the same purpose: to provide an alternative to the growing pressures for radical change and revolutionary transformation in the countryside - to prevent another Cuba.

The 1980s brought about entirely new conditions for the class struggle both in the countryside and the cities. In the cities the labour movement was severely weakened and in some cases entirely destroyed by military regimes that launched a process of structural adjustment to the new world order. Under these circumstances at first the urban poor took up the struggle against the authoritarian (non-elected) capitalist state and a cycle of 'structural reforms' initiated under the aegis of an emerging neoliberal state (Leiva and Petras, 1994). Under similar circumstances, neoliberal policies of administrative decentralization and 'democratization' (privatization of the responsibility for social welfare and economic development), gave rise to a new generation of NGOs within the middle class sector of an emergent 'civil society', and with it a 'new' type of social movement concerned with a broad range of non-class issues ranging from protecting the environment and the violation of

[2] The literature on the dynamics of these agrarian reforms is voluminous but see Stavenhagen (1970) and Brockett (1988).

human rights to advancing the status of women (Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Melucci, 1992; Slater, 1985).

A new generation of scholars, armed with a postmodern political imaginary and a new sensibility regarding various emerging 'subjectivities' (Brass, 1991), conceptualized this 'development' as the emergence of 'new social movements' that managed to elude the iron cage of Latin America's class structure.

In the countryside the strategy of globalization - integration into a new world order in which the forces of economic freedom are released from the regulatory constraints of the development state - had a rather different outcome. In the countryside the forces of neoliberal globalization and capitalist development accelerated the historic process of primitive accumulation - the dispossession of the direct producers, converting many peasants into a landless or near-landless proletariat, forced to migrate to the cities in the search for new opportunities or resort to wage-labour to sustain the livelihood of their households. However, as noted, not all 'peasants' responded in this way. The response of many was to join a social movement of resistance to the neoliberal state and its policies of structural adjustment to the new world order - to the exceedingly high social costs of this adjustment, that the direct producers, as well as the working class more generally, were expected to (and did) bear.

Destruction of the labour movement

Peasants and workers have been the chief target of neoliberal globalization - of the forces of change and transformation released in the process. But it is evident that the working class and the peasants have responded in very different ways, the former more passively in an adjustment to these forces, the latter more actively in a movement of resistance and opposition. In the 1960s and 1970s the industrial proletariat, in the limited form that it took on the periphery of world capitalism, as well as public-sector workers in the form of a labour movement, led the resistance.

But in the 1980s the labour movement collapsed as workers succumbed to the forces of change ranged against them. Under the working of these forces, the organizational and mobilizational capacity of labour was drastically reduced, in some contexts destroyed. But in the countryside conditions were very different. For whatever reason, the peasantry in its diverse forms was able to more actively respond to the policy conditions of neoliberal globalization and structural adjustment, creating for itself space for a politics of active resistance against the forces of agrarian transformation and the reaction of the democratized neoliberal state.

The earlier liberal-capitalist development state, in its offensive against the forces of resistance in the countryside, had pursued a twofold strategy of land reform and rural development, adding to it as circumstances demanded a strategy and tactics of accommodation, cooptation and repression. This strategy worked - more or less - as the wave of revolutionary change subsided and the remnants of defeated movements in the armed struggle either dispersed or went to ground as in Chiapas and Guerrero in Mexico. But in the 1980s as the state turned against the working class the rural poor of landless and near-landless peasants regrouped and began to reorganize, constructing in the process social movements that would come to represent the most dynamic forces of resistance in the class struggle.

The state's response to the pressures for revolutionary change exerted by the peasants in the wake of the Cuban Revolution ranged from rural development to outright repression with violence. But the preferred approach was to combine a strategy of rural development based on international cooperation with a program of state-led land reform. As noted above, in the wake of the Cuban revolution most governments in the region enacted legislation in support of a land reform programs designed to return the 'land to the tiller' - turning over to the restless and rebellious peasants and the rural poor land that was surplus to the production requirements (not in productive use) of the landed aristocracy - the big

proprietors who over the years by one means or the other had acquired ownership of most and the best arable land.

Notwithstanding the state-led land reforms of the 1960s, and despite continuing pressures on governments to adopt legal reform measures, with the exception of Cuba there was no fundamental change in the structure of land tenure. Many categories of rural households remained - and remain to this day - landless or near-landless. Close to 90% of all arable land in Latin America are concentrated in holdings owned by only 26% of rural proprietors. Despite the state-led land reform programs of the 1960s and two decades of grassroots land reform (direct action in the form of 'occupations'), up to two-thirds of arable land in Brazil remains in the hands of an exceedingly small class of proprietors who account for barely 3% of all landowners, while close to five million families remain landless. In Argentina, according to the Censo Agropecuario 2001,, 43% of the productive land is owned by fewer than 4,000 landowners, representing less than 1.5% (1.3%) of agricultural producers. At the other extreme 83% of small landholders and producers own and work 13.3% of the land. And these figures are typical for Latin America, a region that has the most unequal and inequitable distributions of land (and other wealth-generating assets) in the world despite several decades of state-led reform in the 20th Century.

Moreover, over the two decades of 'pro-growth' (= neoliberal) policy measures (= 'structural reform') the degree of concentration in land ownership, and the disparity in accessing means of production in the rural areas, if anything has increased. In Argentina, this has meant the expulsion or forced outmigration of over 200,000 smallholding producers over the past decade and a half. In Brazil, it is estimated, it has involved an exodus over five million rural inhabitants over the course of the last two decades of neoliberal reform.[3] In addition - and this is true for many countries in other parts of the world - the majority of those who have retained some access to the land are barely able to subsist let alone make a commercially viable living. They are forced into a relation of wage-labour under conditions of precarious forms of employment, miserable working conditions and poverty. At least one half of all agricultural production units in Latin America are deemed to be economically marginal, and expected to disappear. There is no room for them in the neoliberal model.[4]

In response to this situation, euphemistically described as 'social exclusion,'[5] vast numbers of a dispossessed rural proletariat are forced to migrate to the cities or abroad, resulting in one of the major upheavals and social transformations in 'modern times': capitalist development of urban-based economic activity and an associated makeover of a rural population - much of it peasant in one form or the other - into an heterogeneous labourforce of low paid service workers (domestics), peddlers, day-labourers ,wage-workers and, increasingly, narco-workers. Neoliberal policies led to the massive closure of mines, for example in Bolivia in the mid-1980s, under the direction of Jeffrey Sachs and the IMF, leading to outmigration to the cities and to the countryside, mainly to the coca growing fields of Chapare. The miners brought with them their organizing and class solidarity creating the leading peasant movement in all of Bolivia.

One consequence of this transformation is that the land struggle, hitherto confined to agrarian society, moved from rural areas to the periphery of the cities. The process was well

[3] The 1986 rural Census estimated the rural population as 23.4 million people. By 1995, the rural population had declined to 18 million, pointing towards a massive exodus of over five million people. Because of declining revenues, the compression of prices to below production 1972] costs, and massively increasing indebtedness among producers, an additional 800,000 families, that is, over two million persons, are estimated by IBGE (the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) to have abandoned the countryside in just five years (from 1995 to 1999) because of low prices and the lack of land and credit.

[4] Carlos Menem, President at the time, declared that at least 200,000 small and medium-sized farms and rural 'businesses' were productively marginal and surplus to the country's requirements, and could not be supported by government policy.

[5] On the concept of 'social exclusion' see Behrman, Gaviria and Székely (2003); Lesboupin (2000); Paugam (1996); Pochman et al. (2006); and Wolfe (1994). Some of these scholars work for organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the ILO and ECLAC as project consultants or policy analysts while others are affiliated with a broad range of 'independent' research institutions or universities. But they all seem to share this enthusiasm for 'social exclusion' as the problem of poverty and the 'social capital' of the poor as the solution.

under way in the 1960s and 1970s, when up to a quarter of the rural population migrated to the urban centres in search of wage employment and housing. Most of these dwellings were constructed on a self-help basis by communities of rural migrants who invaded and 'settled' - illegally occupied and squatted on - unused areas of urban land, creating in the process the *pueblos jovenes* of Lima, the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, the *rancherias* of Caracas and *callampas* of Santiago, Chile. Because of this urbanization process, up to 60% of the non-rural population is in exceeding precarious housing and miserable living conditions (Guimarães, 1997: 191).

As a result of these and such developments, land occupations and the struggle for social change materialized in a new urban context, replicating some of the dynamics of the struggle for rural land but in a different form: land invasion, squatting, negotiations with the municipal government for services and legal title to their 'property', and, through grassroots organizational efforts ('local development'), upgrading these neighbourhoods into working class *barrios*. The social dynamics of this process are complex, with diverse dimensions that include the break up of many families, with the women staying behind in rural areas to tend subsistence plots of land, and the men involved in seasonal out-migration in search of urban employment (Portes, *et al.,* 1989).

Under these conditions, many landless rural workers were and are unable or unwilling to break their connection to agrarian society and their subjectivity as peasants, even without any access to the land. Despite this, the structure of landholding continues to reproduce the conditions of widespread rural poverty and to fuel an exodus of large numbers of marginal producers, dispossessed 'peasants' and 'landless rural workers'. The exception is rural labour that succeeds in organizing, occupying large uncultivated estates and establishing cooperatives or family farms or both.

On the receiving end: Peasants and indigenous communities

The social structure of agricultural production can be defined in terms of size of landholding and income distribution. In these terms the basic structure includes three categories of landholders: large, middle and small - the relative proportions of which vary by context. In Brazil, for example, smallholders constitute somewhat over 90% of the total number of peasant producers, a proportion that has not substantially changed over the course of the neoliberal macroeconomic policy regime since its institution in the early 1990s. Large and medium–sized landholders in the same context have also been reproduced within this paramedical structure, the former more so than the latter for whatever largely unstudied reason (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Peasant by Size [hectares] of Landholding and Percentage of Total, Brazil 1992-2003

	1992		1998		2003	
Large [2000-100,00+]	19,077	0.6	27,556	0.8	33,104	0.8
Medium [200-2000]	204,753	7.0	259,654	7.2	286,172	6.6
Small [<1- 200]	2,700,374	92.3	3,299,315	92.0	3,971,255	92.6
	2,924,204	100.0	3,586,525	100.0	4,290,531	100.0

Source: Nera, *Dataluta, Relatorio Preliminar 2004*, Tabela 13, p.20.

Table 3.2 provides for Brazil data on changes in the distribution of land acreage owned by the three categories of peasants. It shows a surprisingly strong trend towards divergence in the share of total land owned by the big holders on one extreme and smallholder on the other. The trend towards land ownership clearly reflects on the relative

dynamism of the capitalist development process vis-à-vis the land struggle of the rural landless workers. Considering the large number of families of rural landless rural workers settled (*asentados*) on the land over this period as the direct result of actions taken by the MST, the figures also point towards the correlation of class forces in the land struggle. Table 3.3 provides a graphic representation of this correlation in the ratio of total acreage share to the share of total number of producers for each category of peasant. Again, the striking feature of this dynamic pattern is divergence at the extremes of land distribution. The big landowners increased their share of landholding over or despite fifteen years of land struggle by the MST, eight years of state-led reform and four years of market-assisted land reform.

Table 3.2 Percentage Share of Land Acreage by Category of Peasant, Brazil 1992-2003

	1992	1998	2003
Big	34	40	49
Medium	34	33	37
Small	32	27	14
Total Acreage	310,030,972	415,548,885	418,483,332

Source: Nera, *Dataluta, Relatorio Preliminar 2004*, Tabela 13, p.20.

Table 3.3 Ratio of Total Acreage Share to Share of Total No. Producers, by Peasant Category

1992	1998	2003	
Big	56.7	50.0	61.3
Medium	4.9	4.6	5.6
Small	0.4	0.3	0.2

Source: Nera, *Dataluta, Relatorio Preliminar 2004*, Tabela 13, p.20.

As for the income generated by economic activity in the form of agricultural production, many if not all of the big landholders can be classified as 'rich', some rich enough to accumulate capital and to be transformed out of the peasant economy into rural and/or urban capitalists, by investing their income productively in different ways in different sectors. At the bottom of the land size/income hierarchy, a sizeable proportion - in many contexts, the vast majority - are income poor and subject to forces of expulsion or primitive accumulation. Many of the smallholder peasants under these conditions - making up the bulk of landholders - are rendered landless or near-landless, virtually all of them impoverished and forced to either migrate to the cities or work off-farm for wages, converting them - at least over 50% in many contexts - into a vast rural semi-proletariat.

As for the patterns of change in the social structure it is difficult to determine in most cases for lack of data and analysis. Dynamic studies of size distribution of landholdings - to measure the distribution of landholding by size at different points of time - have been conducted in some contexts but the resulting data are difficult to determine in terms of the inner social dynamics of the process of change. Thus it is likely that in each size category some conditions tend to both reproduce producers in that size category while other induce either a downward or upward mobility. In the big landholder or income rich category, a small proportion is able to save and thus accumulate capital, and to be converted out of the peasantry into capitalists.

But does this diminish the number and proportion of landholders in this size category of producers? Table 3.1 suggests that it does not. Relevant studies in other contexts show that it depends on demographic and other social processes, including the likelihood that a number of middle-size/income producers are elevated into large/high income category and the possibility that some peasants in this category will experience downward mobility. Also some unknown percentage of middle-sized landholders are likely to be converted into a class of family farmers (*agricultures familiares*), losing not their connection to the land but rather their status and self-identification as 'peasants'.

Under these conditions, the question is whether the middle size/income category of peasant is growing in proportion; that is, in relation to the large/rich and small/poor peasant as Chayanov found to be the case for Russia in the 1920s? Alternatively is there a tendency towards size/income differentiation, a relative hollowing out of the middle and increasing growth at the extremes - as Lenin had argued in his classic study of social differentiation and the transformation of the Russian peasantry? Tables 3.1-3 suggest that the trend identified by Lenin is closer to reality for Brazil in the most recent phase of capitalist development. If this is the case, what are the social dimensions of this process of land concentration and social polarization? What are the dimensions of: this apparent social dualism: wealth and capital accumulation at one extreme of the social structure, poverty and proletarianization at the other?

As indicated, more study of these dynamics need to be undertaken to establish a national or regional pattern (of conditions of reproduction and transformation in each landholding/producer category). The one dynamic trend that can be definitively established is that of out migration and proletarianization vis-à-vis the small landholder category of peasant. Undoubtedly, some elements of the middle size category are also led to migrate and abandon agriculture, and a larger number are evidently converted into a non-peasant category of agricultural producer - family farming based on simple commodity production - losing thereby not their connection to the land but to their identity as peasants. It is even possible, although not likely, that some middle-sized peasants can increase their handholding by resorting to the market mechanism to buy land and become larger if not rich. However, it is for the largest category of peasant, the smallholder that a clear pattern has emerged, even with only a cursory examination of the available data and without a systemic dynamic analysis of trends by landholding size and income and associated social and political processes. The pattern is for a significant and increasing proportion of peasants in this category to be proletarianized, fuelling a well-established process of outmigration and resulting in the impoverishment and proletarianization of a large (and seemingly growing) proportion of smallholder peasants.

Peasants take action and the neoliberal state responds

In 1978 David Lehman, among others, declared the era of state-led land reforms to be over, having exhausted its political limits, and the state itself beating a retreat from the counter-offensive launched by the big proprietors (and capital) against these reforms. The first step towards this counter-revolution was taken in Latin America in the form of the coup launched against the democratically elected regime of Salvador Allende. But within a decade, the State was everywhere in retreat, giving way to the 'new world order' in a process of structural adjustment and neoliberal globalization. State-led land reform was a casualty of the process.

In the cities a major structural response to these developments was the emergence of a 'civil society' - a broad spectrum of social organizations spanning the space between the family and the state. Within the middle class sector of this 'civil society' there emerged a broad array of NGOs, associational in form and concerned to assume responsibilities abdicated by the state. In 1970 by at least one account there were only some 250 of such organizations. But by the end of the 1990s, this sector of 'civil society' had grown to an estimated 25,000 to 40,000, including at least 10,000 of what the World Bank (the lead

agency in the war against global poverty) regard as 'operational' agencies or strategic partners in the field of 'development' - 'developmental NGOs' in the lingo of the 'development'.

However, in the countryside the organizational - and political - form of resistance to the forces of capitalist development was entirely different. It was to organize opposition to government policies, to change the government if not its policies. The forces of this resistance were rooted in the popular sector of what was subsequently termed 'civil society' - in the class-based or community-based organizations of rural and agrarian society. By the end of the decade class- or community-based social movements were constructed in the countryside of Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico and elsewhere, and in the 1990s a number of these movements initiated a programs of direct action and social mobilization against the neoliberal state and its policies.

The responses of the state and the guardians of the new world order (neoliberal globalization) to these mobilizations were predictable. This strategic response can be placed into three categories: (1) redesign of the 'new economic model, moving beyond the 'Washington Consensus' by adding to the neoliberal programs of 'pro-growth' structural reforms in macroeconomic policy a 'new social policy' as well as specific measures to protect the most vulnerable groups in society - to give the entire process of 'productive transformation' a human face;[6] (2) a decentralized local development process targeted at the localities and communities if the rural poor, and designed to open up a local front on the renewed war against rural poverty; and (3) a market-assisted land reform program.

Market-assisted land reforms

In the 1960s and 1970s, the state in Latin America initiated land reform programs ostensibly to correct a serious imbalance between property ownership and agricultural production but in fact to appease the popular demand for land. These programs were in part a response to the Cuban Revolution and in large part to growing pressures for revolutionary change exerted by the social movements of the peasantry.[7] In the 1980s, however, sweeping changes and a neoliberal program of structural reform in national policy generated conditions for an alternative path towards 'agrarian transformation' (Kay, 2000).

Another factor was the institution of a community-based form of alternative development designed by its theorists to secure the sustainability of rural livelihoods (Amalric, 1998; Brockett, 1988; Chambers and Conway, 1998; Helmore, Kristen and Singh, 2001). This and several other forms of local or community-based development, predicated on the accumulation of social capital rather than the politically messy process of improving access to the land and other wealth-generating 'assets', had the effect of reducing, if not removing entirely, the pressure on governments to expropriate large landholdings and redistribute them to the landless or near-landless, a large and rapidly growing segment of the rural population.

In these circumstances state-sponsored programs of redistributive growth and land reform came to an end, signalled by the recognition in academic and policy-making circles that 'land reform is dead' (Lehman, 1978). However, under the same conditions two

[6] UNICEF (Cornia, Jolly and Stewart, 1987) conceptualized this process as 'structural adjustment with a human face'. CEPAL (1990), on the other hand, conceptualized the process as 'productive transformation with equity' (to expand opportunities for the socially excluded to participate in the production process b y improving their access to wealth- or income-generating assets. The UNDP [1996], for its part, conceptualized the process as 'sustainable human development'. On these efforts to move beyond the Washington Consensus without abandoning the fundamental pillar of neoliberalism in its prescribed 'pro-growth' policies see Veltmeyer (2007).

[7] After Cuba, state-led land reforms took place in Peru from 1958 to 1974, Brazil from 1962 to 1964, Chile from 1966 to 1973, Ecuador from 1964 to 1967, El Salvador from 1980 to 1985, Guatemala between 1952 and 1954 (and again after the civil war following the peace accords), Honduras in 1873, and Nicaragua from 1979 to 1986. These reforms were implemented by the state, regardless of its form (authoritarian, military, liberal reformist, proto-revolutionary). But they were undertaken in response to mass peasant mobilizations and the perceived threat of 'social revolution' (Blanco 1972; De Janvry, Sadoulet and Wolford 1998; Kay 1981, 1982).

alternative forms of land reform emerged, one initiated from within the popular sector of an emerging 'civil society' (see the discussion below on the politics of revolutionary change), the other constructed by economists at the World Bank: a market-assisted approach towards land and agrarian reform (Deininger, 1998).

This market-led and-assisted approach dominated government policy in the 1990s but it evolved in stages. The first was the formulation and implementation, in the early 1990s for the most (Mexico, Ecuador, etc.), of an agrarian modernization law designed to commodify land - to create or strengthen the functioning of a land market. In countries such as Mexico with a system of collective or community ownership (the *ejido*) modernization entailed the institution of individual over collective rights.

The second stage involved the market mechanism of land titling - giving the direct producers secure legal title to the land so as to allow for its sale. With an opening of local economies to the world market, and under conditions of a production crisis that pushed many peasant farmers and independent small and medium-sized producers into debt, the agrarian modernization law had the predictable result of increasing the concentration of land ownership, adding to the other 'push' factors working on the peasantry, accentuating ongoing processes of dispossession, proletarianization and urbanization.

A third and highly contested stage in the process of market-assisted land reforms entails a policy of instituting land banks (Bromley, 1989; World Bank 1996, 1997). In regard to this policy, the World Bank instituted pilot projects in Brazil, Colombia, and the Philippines. The aim of the policy, and the institution of this particular market mechanism, was not only to promote and improve the functioning of the land market but, at least in the case of Brazil, to counteract the tactic of land occupations used by the movement of rural landless workers. That is, the aim was to stimulate use of 'the market mechanism' in lieu of what the leaders of this movement take to be 'the broader class struggle' (Stedile, 1998).

In 1998, with an initial injection of $25 million of capital, the World Bank launched the Land Bank in Brazil, searching at the same time for a way of securing support for this strategy in the small landholding sector. One of these ways was to rally support from within the non-peasant elements of this sector - more democratically minded small-scale family farmers, effectively dividing the movement of rural landless workers on political lines. The dynamics of this process are still unfolding and need a closer look and more study.

Very few Latin American countries with a significant agricultural sector have escaped this drive to create a land market and other forms of a market-assisted approach to land reform. In the 1990s, country after country instituted an agrarian 'modernisation' or 'reform' law in one form or another. In Mexico and Ecuador this meant the abolition of constitutional protection of indigenous communal lands, a policy successfully instituted in the case of Mexico, where the dominant peasant federation was under control of the government. In Ecuador, however, this policy hit a political snag in the form of an 'indigenous uprising'. More generally, governments closed down their land redistribution programs and turned towards the market mechanisms of land titling and land banks in improving the access of the rural poor, and peasant farmers, to the land and the resources needed to convert themselves into productive producers (UNRISD, 2000).

Between 1991 and 1994, at the behest of the World Bank and within the framework of its neoliberal agenda, the governments of Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and a number of other countries in South and Central America, turned towards a market-assisted approach to agrarian reform. This approach was based on legislation that included the abolition of the constitutional or legal protection of communal property and legal entitlement to land worked by smallholders, increasing their capacity to sell their land and, in the process, to build a land market, as well as, supposedly, increasing the 'efficiency' of production.[8] However, combined with the elimination of subsidies to local producers, the commercialization of credit, the reduction of protective tariffs, and in many cases an overvalued currency, these measures

[8] In a number of systematic studies into the productivity of small versus large highly capitalized farms the general finding has been that in all cases relatively smaller, less capitalized farms are much more productive per unit area—200 to 1,000 % greater—than the larger ones (Rosset 1999: 2).

(land titling, *etc.*), rather than resolving the agricultural crisis, have created what analysts have termed a 'difficult environment' for various categories of producers of tradable products, especially 'small scale peasant producers' (Crabtree, 2003: 144). The latter, as Crabtree points out concerning Peru (but which can be generalized), have been 'extremely vulnerable to the inflow of cheap agricultural products'. Not only has this 'development' destroyed local economies, forcing large numbers of local producers into bankruptcy or poverty, or to migrate, it has either brought about or accelerated a fundamental change in production and consumption patterns away from traditional subsistence and commercial crops, especially grains like quinoa, kiwicha, coca, alluco, beans, and potatoes. The full impact of this change, and its implications, has not been evaluated.

In the not atypical case of Peru, the abolition of ECASA, one of a number of government marketing boards and agricultural price support institutions, liberalised the national market in rice, removing an organization that, like its counterparts in other countries in the region, had maintained price stability for the benefit of local producers. Some of the functions of ECASA were taken over by PRONAAA,[9] a government-subsidized food programs for the poor that bought directly from small-scale producers. However, such an institutional change had relatively little impact on the poorest farmers, many of who had never benefited from government programs of any sort (Crabtree 2003: 147).

As for the producers who managed to integrate themselves into the competitive local urban markets, the disappearance of *Banco Agrario* meant that they were forced to rely on various agro-industrial firms for commercial credit. This credit was extended to the same producers only under the most onerous terms, with rates that in the case of Brazil under Cardoso reached 20% a month, given the level of presumed 'risk' assumed by creditors. These creditors are extremely reluctant to lend, even to larger-scale, more prosperous landowners with privileged market access. When they do lend, interest rates charged reflect the perception of risk involved in lending to small-scale peasant producers. Their appetite for lending is also reduced by the incidence of bankruptcies in sectors such as asparagus that had briefly seemed to offer endless possibilities (Crabtree 2003: 145-47).

In Mexico and Peru these and other such institutional reforms and recourse to 'the market mechanism' resulted in a drastic deterioration in the life-situation of the smallholders and their relation to the market, compelling them to sell the product of their labour at prices well below the costs of production, and pushing many of them into debt, poverty and bankruptcy. In Mexico, this situation generated one of the largest mass movements in the country's long history of land struggle - an organization of indebted 'independent' (non-peasant) farmers (*El Barzón*).

As for the peasant economy in Ecuador, Mexico, Central America and elsewhere in the region, it has been devastated, forcing large numbers to flee the countryside in the search of wage employment in the cities and urban centres. The only non-political alternative to this route was - and remains - rural poverty.

Urban-rural links among and with the peasant movements

The wave of rural activism that emerged in the 1980s and unfolded in the 1990s had specific conditions, including, paradoxically, a growing democratization process and repression of the forces mobilized in the process. Under these conditions, the peasant and indigenous organizations in the countryside responded by mounting a resistance movement that has cut across the rural-urban divide, forming an extensive, if shifting, complex of strategic and tactical alliances with other civil and political organizations, mostly urban, involved in the popular struggle.

These alliances and linkages can be put into three categories, each with its own dynamics: (1) horizontal linkages among networks of NGOs and grassroots movements such

[9] Fujimori's poverty relief programs was similar to Salinas' *Pronasol* in that it served primarily as an electoral mechanism for securing the rural vote.

as *Sem Techos* in the urban areas: (2) intra-and intersectoral linkages with class- abased organizations and sociopolitical movements in a national context; and (3) international networks with organizations that constitute what has been termed 'global civil society'.

As for the NGO networks they were located within the 'middle strata' of the urban centres, and formed primarily to the purpose of providing support to, and solidarity with, the struggles and social movements of grassroots organizations in the popular sector. These linkages bring together a broad range of concerns, from the protection and enhancement of political and human rights, diverse environmental issues of concern to neighbourhood groups, women or minority groups of various sorts, to shared concern with the impact of government policies in the context of the processes of globalization and structural adjustment. In regard to this latter concern, and in solidarity with the struggle of class-based organizations and movements as relates to shared resistance against government policies or concern with organization-specific issues, these urban middle-class social organizations also participate in the complex of intra- and intersectoral alliances that characterize the organization and politics of these class-based organizations, In this connection, all of the major sociopolitical movements such as the MST, for the purpose of soliciting support for their campaigns to influence public opinion and pressure governments have tended to form linkages with international advocacy groups as well as all manner of civil and nongovernmental organizations.

As for the development agency and role of the NGOs, many have positioned themselves to mediate between grassroots or community-based organizations and the international cooperation for development (Biekart, 1996; Carroll, 1992; Landim, 1988). The development-oriented NGOs entered into a partnership with both bilateral and multilateral development associations, and the local governments or municipalities that have been assigned, or have assumed for themselves, the responsibility for advancing the development process within the institutional framework of the new model (Blair, 1997). In the process, as executing agents of the project of international cooperation, NGOs play an ambiguous role that has not been exempt from criticisms by many grassroots organizations and a few academics (Marcos, 1996; Harriss, 2001). The thrust of these criticisms is that often NGOs have wittingly or unwittingly served as a Trojan Horse for the forces of neoliberal globalization, advancing the interests of external agents rather than those of the communities and grassroots organizations (Wallace, 2003).[10]

It is argued that in accepting the funding and conforming to the programmatic principles and requirements of the multilateral and bilateral development associations the NGOs have contributed to the disarticulation and disempowerment of grassroots organizations in terms of their capacity to confront the power structure on the issue of improving access to land other productive resources - 'asset redistribution', in the lingo of development.[11] In exchange for giving up a confrontational politics and the search for radical structural change in the structure of production and decision-making, the grassroots organizations have been empowered to participate in decisions that are strictly local in their scope and effects (Marcos, 1996).

More precisely, in the context of the partnership strategy pursued by international development agencies and the neoliberal state, community-based or grassroots

[10] This point is argued by Ulcuango (*Boletín ICCI*,1, 5, Agosto 1999). In the view of this indigenous intellectual, organically linked to the indigenous movement and CONAIE, its representative body, NGOs wittingly or no have been called into arms and used as a 'economic-political weapon' by the organizations of global capital (the World bank, the IMF, IDB, the US) for what in this anti-systemic discourse appears as a struggle for 'global domination.'

[11] On this argument see Marcos (1996) regarding Peru. The regional and global trend towards decentralization and the agency of local governments in the development process has been viewed in a similar light—as a means of disarticulating traditional forms of social and political organization of the indigenous communities, an opportunity for undermining their traditional authority and consolidating the economic and political power of the elite, regarding its capacity for manipulating the local politics process with its discourse on 'modernity' (Editorial *Boletín ICCI 'RIMAY'*, 2, 16, Julio; 2, 18, Setiembre). In all of the countries with a substantial indigenous population—Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Guatemala one of the more critical concerns with neoliberal policies relates to their negative impact on the relative autonomy of indigenous forms of community-based social, economic and political organization.

organizations have been empowered to participate in the identification of their basic needs and decisions as to how, where and on what to spend the poverty alleviation funds that might come their way under the 'new social policy' of 'human sustainable development'. From the perspective of grassroots and community-based organizations, particularly those concerned with more fundamental change in the direction of radical egalitarianism or socialism, this has been a *Faustian* bargain at best.

In this connection,[12] the 1990s was characterized by the construction of inter-sectoral alliances and transnational activist networks. These alliances and networks in many cases and diverse contexts (Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico…) were formed or joined by federations of peasant producer organizations, producer coops, indigenous organizations and labour unions. In the 1980s a number of such alliances were formed by organizations that were otherwise careful to retain their autonomy vis-à-vis political parties and some distance from the NGOs that were sprouting all over the region in the hospitable soil of neoliberalism.[13]

In the 1990s, linkages and strategic alliances among these organizations were broadly extended in the form of regional and international associations of diverse national organizations (Edelman, 1998). In Latin America ASOCODE, formed in Tegucicalpa in 1991, is an example of this trend. Other examples include *Iniciativa Civil para la Integración Centroamericana* (ICIC), a lobbying group formed by a network of cooperatives, NGOs, labour organizations, community groups, and diverse organizations of small enterprise operators and agricultural producers; and *Via Campesino*, formed in 1993 as an transnational network of 55 peasant organizations from 36 countries in the Americas, Asia and Africa.

Although there are few studies on the workings and outcomes of these regional associations and transnational networks, there is little question about their positive role in raising awareness of common problems, establishment of shared principles, and, in some contexts, concerted action and in others the formation of a common front or solidarity actions to improve the capacity of local grassroots organizations to influence the policies of governments in the region.

However, the formation of alliances with non-agricultural groups, a rejection of political party ties and the building of transnational networks coincided with, or has led to, a more pluralist and less confrontational approach to politics - a turning away from the strategy of 'peasant wars' and the tactic of armed struggle. In regard to these shifting dynamics of organized struggle in the case of ASOCODE in Costa Rica and other countries of Central America see Edelman (1998). In the case of rural struggles in Chiapas and elsewhere in Mexico diverse studies conducted by Harvey (1998) detail some of the dynamics involved. As for CONAIE, the leading although battered and weakened force in Ecuador's popular movement, the weekly *Boletin ICCI "RIMAY*" provides a documented report on the changing dynamics of struggle waged by the indigenous movement.

As for intersectoral linkages, they were initially formed between peasant and indigenous organizations and labour unions and workers' *centrales* on the other. However, in many cases these strategic alliances broke down or were ineffective, leading a number of organizations in the agrarian and indigenous movement to turn towards associational-type social organizations in the cities and urban centres. In some cases, these linkages are

[12] Lest it be thought that this characterization of the NGOs formed in the 1980s and 1990s apply to all of them, a substantial albeit unidentified number (see the discussion in Chapter 8) are indeed 'progressive', concerned with genuine social change and working with rather than against the grassroots organizations or class-based social movements. A contemporary example of these more progressive NGOs, provided by a colleague Darcy Tetreault, would include the *Red de Alternativas Sustentables Agropecuarias* (RASA), whose membership and leadership include peasants and indigenous families, academics and social activists. To qualify, if not nuance somewhat, our analysis of the political role played by many development NGOS as an unwitting (or witting) agent of imperialism, there are undoubtedly many other such genuinally 'progressive' NGOs. However, there are precious few NGOs that are willing to go the distance—from a more humane form of capitalism to radical egalitarianism and socialism as a form of national development.

[13] In the polarized political climate of the mid-1980s in Central America revolutionary movements and activists alike tended to view allies in the region and beyond as crucial for political success and even physical survival. On these early international contacts see Edelman (1998).

mediated by political parties in the pursuit of state power, but for the most part they relate to strategic alliances around critical issues affecting both urban and rural organizations in the popular movement In some contexts (for example, Bolivia) shared concerns and actions were concerted and pursued within the framework of a common organization, designed to the purpose of broadening the social base of a common struggle against the neoliberal state and its policies. More generally, however, the diverse interests of class-based social groups were brought together not organizationally but in a strategic alliance between diverse federations of peasants, indigenous peoples and organized workers. This has been the case, for example, in the struggles waged by the MST, the Zapatistas and CONAIE..

In this connection, the MST is an organization of landless or near-landless rural 'workers' while CONAIE and the EZLN are organizations of indigenous peasants and their communities, the economies of which are based on a peasant household mode of production. The FARC, in a very different context, and under conditions that are to an extent shared yet unique to Colombia, also has its social basis in the peasantry broadly defined. In each case the noted dynamism of the social movements, in terms of the mobilized forces of popular resistance, can be attributed, at least to some extent, to the system of class and intersectoral alliances involved. This is why the political landscape of the Central and South American countryside in the 1990s is littered by so many cross-sectoral organizations.[14] The relative failure of these organizations of peasant farmers, indigenous peoples and rural workers to create a sustained popular movement against neoliberalism, and to advance an alternative project, can be similarly explained in similar terms

The mid-1990s seems to be a turning point in the popular movement in terms of both the strategy of intersectoral linkages and resort to the mechanism of democratic elections as a way of bringing about social change *with* state power. To that point the indigenous and peasant movements had relied primarily on a strategy of social mobilization and the tactics of direct action. However, in the mid-1990s, the major organizations in these movements, such as the MST and CONAIE (also the cocaleros in Bolivia and the Zapatistas in Chiapas) in some cases opted for the parliamentary road to state-power (to use of the electoral mechanism in their politics) but in all cases turned towards 'civil society' for political support and assistance - for a 'no power' approach to social change, to bring about change in government policy without resort to political confrontation and direct action. In effect, the popular movement was divided as to what road it might take to social change: (1) social mobilization and direct action - in the form of a social movement; (2) democracy - use of the electoral mechanism in their local and national politics; and/or (3) local development - to seek improvements in socioeconomic conditions and social change in the local spaces of the power structure rather than challenging it.

The divisive effect on the popular movement of the decision to take the 'parliamentary road' to social change is clearly illustrated in the subsequent political developments in Bolivia and Ecuador. In the case of Bolivia the the resort to the electoral apparatus of liberal democracy and the election of Evo Morales did bring legal, cultural and political rights to the indigenous communities, but it also led to the cooption of the movement, by the state. Cultural gains were at the expense of organizational and political unity, and with extremely limited socioeconomic benefits (absolutely no change in the structure of landholding despite the revolutionary rhetoric). In the case of Ecuador, resort to the parliamentary road to social change almost destroyed CONAIE as a social movement.

As for the MST, the largest and most dynamic of Latin America's peasant movements, it did not resort to the electoral mechanism, choosing instead to combine a strategy of social mobilization and direct action, as a means of improving access of movement members to the land (if not a fundamental change in the structure of ownership), with a strategy of alliances with 'civil society' in Brazil itself and abroad - in what might be

[14] See, for example, the struggles of the indigenous movement in Ecuador (CONAIE) against the government's various attempts, from 1994 to 2000 to implement a neoliberal program of structural adjustment. On the basis of its organizational and mobilizing capacity, and its capacity to concert an alliance of oppositional forces and popular resistance, this movement has been surprisingly successful in preventing the government from implementing its agenda (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005).

termed 'global civil society'. The outcomes of this strategy vis-à-vis global civil society need more study but they do seem to include limited positive benefits such as enhanced access to financial resources and a level of organizational support that could be used as form of political capital, a potential lever of change in public policy. However, in regard to the partnerships forged with the NGOs in Brazil's civil society, the outcomes thus far are mixed to say the least, and negative to say more.

The problem, one also discovered by the Zapatistas, is that regardless of the professed ideological concern with neoliberalism the NGOs are after all agents of the neoliberal state, funded and contracted in order to bring the peasants into line with the new world order, to adjust the best way they can to its dynamics. In this connection, virtually all of the developmental NGOs that operate in Brazil - and the same is true for Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia - are financed either by the intergovernmental 'overseas development associations' or, increasingly, by the state itself. As a result, the peasant and indigenous movements are expected, as a funding condition, to moderate their politics and to channel and transmute their demand for social change into an acceptable form within the limits allowed by the system of democratic politics. Indeed, the effect of this political adjustment on the politics of the MST has been noted by a number of observers, who point towards evidence of ideological moderation in the stance and politics of the leadership, a change that can be attributed directly to the strategy of links to Brazil's civil society. Indeed, the MST itself, in seeking to move beyond the politics of land occupation to the politics of production on the land, to an extent has been converted into an NGO, with the inevitable consequence of an implicit agreement to abide by the rules of the game decreed by the political class.

Conclusion

It is possible to identify across Latin America a growing trend towards linkages among diverse organizations involved in the popular struggle.[15] The most important of these linkages brought together peasants, indigenous communities and workers - both urban and rural - within the same organization (for example, the CMS - *Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales* in Ecuador) but more often bringing them together in the limited non-organizational form of a strategic or tactical alliance.

The importance of multiclass alliances to the popular struggle cannot be overemphasized. The dynamics of these alliances are critical to an understanding the nature and scope of political responses to neoliberal capitalist development in the region, and for gauging the forces unleashed in the process of popular struggle against these conditions. For one thing, horizontal links and alliances among organizations in the popular movement provide conditions for coordinating and directing the accumulated and mobilized forces for change - for moving beyond resistance and opposition to constructive re**v**olutionary change and development. The agency for this cannot be found in the state and certainly not the market, whether regulated or free, or in business associations. They have to be sought within the popular movement itself as well as civil society.[16] The question is whether alliances

[15] These linkages are horizontal and intersectoral and as such can be contrasted with the type of linkages advocated by the World Bank and the other IFIs (IDB, for example) and ODAs, including the UNDP. These organizations, for the most part, advocate the formation of a new form of tripartism—a 'collaborative triangle' between 'the public sector, private business and civil society' (Atal and Yen, 1995; Bessis, 1995). However, as pointed out by some panelists at the Roskilde Colloquium of the UN's World Social Summit, the 'necessary collaborative triangle' between public, private and 'third sector' organizations is 'may build up elements of resistance' within the social movements sector.

[16] On this point note the view expressed by David Rockefeller of the Chase Manhattan Bank, the 174th richest person in the world and one of the architects of the Trilateral Commission, to the effect that 'in recent years there's been a trend toward democracy and market economies [which] has lessened the role of government…But…somebody has to take government's place, and business seems to me the logical entity to do it' (quoted by Herman Daly in his address, in 1999, to the International Society for Ecological Economics – http://www.feasta.org/article_daly.htm). This view is entirely consistent with what was termed (Williamson, 1990) the 'Washington Consensus.'

should be sought and constructed with the associational type of NGO in the middle-class sector of this society or with class-based organizations - with a reconstituted labour movement.

To this extent, the strategic turn of the popular movement towards civil society is not necessarily misplaced. The problem consists in the fact that for the NGOs this turn towards strategic partnerships with 'civil society' conforms to a strategy pursued by the guardians of the neoliberal world order, anxious to control and limit any dissent from its policy prescriptions, to preserve capitalism from its opponents and enemies. A turn to class society for allies relates to conditions that are real enough, the identification of a possible agency for change, and an assessment of the social forces that can be mobilized for resistance and a democratic socialist transformation.

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