

Civic society, democratization and globalization in Latin America.

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In the last three decades, Latin America has undergone crucial transformations due to two fundamental causes: the general democratization of most of the countries of the continent (excluding Cuba) and the exposure to globalization. These two phenomena have had contradictory effects upon the societies of the countries of the region. The eighties saw the displacement of the military from practically all Latin governments and their return to the barracks in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador, among others. In Mexico, democratization began with the electoral reform of 1977 that legalized leftist parties, among them the communist party, as a response to the important mobilizations of workers and peasants that occurred during the seventies and the guerilla warfare led by maoist, communist and other non-ideological currents.

Coincidentally, these countries were suffering one of their most serious economic crisis, that lasted long enough to become known as the “lost decade” and that resulted in the fact that most of the countries, to a

greater or lesser extent, abandoned the economic model they had been pursuing until then based on the intervention of the State in the economy, an emphasis on the internal market, the protection of local industry, a social policy intended to protect the workers of the modern economic sectors and the central administration. The mode of development pursued more successfully in the bigger countries, can be characterized as a segmented or incomplete fordism, whilst the workers and middle classes were payed enough to acquire the products that local industry was manufacturing, the majority of the population was still excluded from the modern sector of the economy. The economic model known as import substitution industrialization (ISI) was implemented through a national-popular alliance, ambiguously called “populist”, which gave social organizations a central role (fundamentally labor) that in exchange for their social and political backing of the State and its economic policies, would be granted concessions to the workers in terms of salaries, benefits and social policies.

In some countries the military broke this socio-political pact in the mid-70's, basically for political reasons (Chile-1973, Uruguay-1973 y Argentina-1976) and modified the economic configuration. In others, the new economic pattern was implemented as a response to the economic crisis of the 80's. In

both cases, the new model consisted in the opening of the economy to both productive and financial capitals, its re-orientation towards exports instead of the internal market, the retreat of the State from the economy, the reduction of government employees and the decrease of the scope and extension of social policies. This transformation of the economic pattern and its reorientation toward the external market led most of the Latin American economies to depend on their ability to compete in the global market and attract foreign capital. This led, in its turn to an “under-grading” of the contractual and working conditions in most countries, through deregulation and flexibilization of the labor markets. In the countries where the trade unions were still strong, this demanded that they be sapped and that governments that were susceptible to be pressured by them, be isolated from them. This usually meant the concentration of social policies in the hands of the State, in general though a transition from a corporatist social policy controlled or negotiated by the unions and other social organizations to a focalized, assistance oriented social policy. Paradoxically, this also demanded a process of decentralization of negotiations with trade unions from a branch level collective bargaining to a local one. This also led to the decentralization of education and health programs to the local level (State or

municipal level), that in most cases resulted in the aggravation of territorial and sectorial disparities; which are for example now at the center of the struggle of the Chilean youth.

All this has had three crucial consequences on social life in Latin America:

1. The principal social actor of the ISI period, fundamentally the labor movement (as well as other socio-political actors such as the peasants and poor urban inhabitants) lost its centrality, together with its main support and “partner”, the State. We will discuss the important exceptions to this “rule”: the case of the *peronistas* in Argentina and that of the CUT in Brazil. It must be mentioned that while this actor was central in the industrial society of the developed countries because, as Touraine (1973) has affirmed, they expressed the main conflict of the industrial society and at some moments managed to articulate their particular interests with a social and cultural orientation of society, in the Latin American context the labor movement was basically a political actor, that was central because of its alliance with the developmentist State. In this continent, labor movement was generally subordinated to the State and in many cases the alliance was fomented from

above and responded more to State interests than to workers, although in a State corporatist relation labor received benefits from it in exchange for its fidelity.

2. The decline of the main actor(s) of the Latin American XXth century has led to the appearance of new social movements that share some characteristics that are totally innovative for Latin America. 1. In the first place they originate from below, from the grass roots rather than from the political sphere, they are thus more social and cultural than political. 2. They also share a character that both Touraine and Arato found in many of the social movements that led to the end of communism in eastern and central Europe, that they defined as self-limited, which meant that they do not pretend political power and do not want to be linked to political parties or to the State; to the extent that some of them are antipolitical. One of the most recurrent slogans of the most recent (2011) university student movement in Chile was: “El pueblo unido marcha sin partido” (the people advance without parties) 3. Some authors consider that the new movements that have emerged in the new democratic and globalized Latin American context are basically oriented towards the excesses of neo-liberalism. Although it is true that some of them have done so and have upheld particular economic and

social grievances, many of them are not just defensive but proactive actions, they propose manners and define actions that fill the gaps this economic model creates: in terms of social policies, aid to the poor and the marginal. 4. In fact, the most remarkable of these movements have “instrumentalized” these actions against neo-liberalism in order to denounce the limits of liberal democracy and of citizenship in a purely formal, liberal democracy, and demand its deepening through different means of participation. 5. Another fundamental characteristic of these actions is that they tend to affirm a new type of citizenship, that rejects clientelism, that does not try to exert pressure on the State in order to receive concessions, an attitude typical of the social struggles during the national-popular period. The new social movements demand rights: human rights (security, state of law), social rights (work, education, health), cultural rights (ethnic, religious or gender differences) and subjective rights (abortion, gay marriage, divorce).

These new social movements are defined in three different dimensions: the first of which is delimited in terms of needs, that is regarding what the existing institutions of society cannot deliver; this is especially true in the case of the NGO’s that provide services and goods for the poor, the sick, the marginal. The second dimension comprises the demands that are within the

margins of the existing institutions of society, even though some of them attempt to extend them to their limits. Within these we can consider all those actions that demand that State concessions become social and political rights as well as those that pretend to deepen democracy and expand citizenry. Finally, another set of social actions go beyond the limits of the institutions of society: the cultural movement of the Indian population questions the established ethnical limits of the nation-State, defined in terms of a homogeneous cultural identity, and the subjective rights movements (women rights, sexual minorities) that questions the ethical limits of society based on the traditional definitions of family, women rights, sexual “normality”, etc.

1. Power, decline and recovery of the Latin American labor movement

The labor movement has been central in Latin America. Until the 80's, it was the paradigmatic actor than defined the capacity of action of society in general and of worker's interests in particular. In some countries such as Argentina and Brazil it was the source of the resistance against the military regimes. Its capacity of action was due to the fact that it was able to clearly define its identity: workers meet each other daily in the factory and have the

same basic interests. On the other hand, if one compares labor to other actors, workers can actually endanger the economy of their enterprise and these, situated in the most strategic sectors of the economy (petroleum, electricity, transportation, central public administration), the economy of their country. Nonetheless, the 80's and 90's were marked by tendencies that played against the unions. For one part, this actor suffered from the opening of most of the economies of Latin-America, from the retreat of the State and the deregulation of the economy; the combination of these three elements resulted in the deregulation of the labor market and the flexibilization of the labor conditions in the enterprises that entailed the weakening of the labor unions. In addition, the crisis and the new economic model signified the increase of the informal economy, the tertiary sector of the economy and the reduction of State employees, all of which significantly reduced the weight of the unionized workers in the economy. The formal industrial branches and the State functionaries had been the heart of traditional unionism. This situation was aggravated by the incapacity of the labor movement to compensate the influence lost amid the formal workers with a greater presence among the sectors that increased in these last decades: informal workers, commerce, services (Bronstein, 1995). This

evolution contrasted with the fact that in most countries of the Continent, the process of democratization permitted that the unions act freely for the first time in decades. (Bronstein, 1997). Thus, the rate of unionization, of strikes and strikers diminished greatly in most of the Latin American continent, to the exception of Brazil and Argentina.

The labor movement in the developed countries, where it was the central actor of the industrial society: it agreed upon the main cultural orientations of this society, together with the entrepreneurs, but contested the way wealth was distributed and the concentration of knowledge in the hands of the employers, though the division of the labor process (Touraine, 1973). In contrast, labor Latin America was less a cultural than a political and socio-political actor. It was one of the main supports of the industrializing coalition, together with the national entrepreneurs, the middle classes and the State. This coalition promoted industrialization and the improvement of the working, employment and social protection for formal workers, while it assisted the population that was not yet included in the process of modernization (Lindenboim, 2004:23). This arrangement could be called segmented Fordism, because formal workers saw their conditions improved not only as a manner of getting “paid” for their political support to the State,

but as a way of enhancing the internal market. It was segmented because only part of the population of Latin America was concerned: the minimized workers in the modern sectors of the economy; while other urban and peasants were excluded.

The military coups of the sixties and seventies put on to import substitutive. The only exception was Brazil, where the military managed to exclude labor from the industrializing coalition in order to stop the wealth distribution of the previous governments, while it deepened the import substitution process to include intermediary and capital goods. Both the Chilean and the Argentinean military shifted to a liberal economic model where exports of commodities would prime and where industry would have a secondary role. The crisis of 1982 was the end of import substitution in the countries that had continued implementing it, such as Mexico. In the latter, the discovery of huge oil resources allowed the continuation of the import substitution model without either modifying the productive structure or excluding the popular sectors in order to stop distribution, as oil exports and the debt based on the expectations of these exports made it possible for the Mexican government to continue redistribution. (Marques-Pereira and Théret, 2001; Bizberg, 2011; Bizberg and Theret, 2011)

In this manner, by the mid-eighties most of the countries of the continent were promoting an economic model based on exports and foreign investment and on a coalition formed by entrepreneurs, foreign capital and the State excluded labor. This coalition proceeded to ample privatizations, the retreat of the State from the economy, a shift from a contributory and pay as you go social security system to an individual, capitalization system, from the project of a universal and generalized health system to a private and segmented one; in general, from an expanding, albeit segmented, Providence State, to a more universal but minimal and mainly assistance oriented system.

There have clearly been exceptions to this general tendency of a decline of labor and other traditional social movements. In Argentina and Brazil, the trade union movement has succeeded maintaining or recovering its force. In Brazil, this has happened especially during the presidency of Lula between 2002 and 2010, while in Argentina with the Kirchner-Fernandez presidencies from the year 2003. The fact that democratization in both of these countries was the result of an ample mobilization of civic society (where trade unions had central role) meant there was fertile ground for the development of other forms of social action in the last twenty years. Moreover in both

Argentina and Brazil, there was no de-mobilization of society following democratization like in Chile, once the parties decided to participate in the plebiscite of Pinochet in 1988 (Oxhorn, 1994), and in Mexico after the union and peasant movements of the first half of the seventies, that were successfully channeled through the electoral area by the regime of the PRI with the political reform of 1977 (Bizberg, 2010, Aziz, 2003). The fact that in both of these countries the movements that resisted the dictatorship, retained their importance, explains why civic society continued being very active and why although labor was also weakened due to the neo-liberal measures, it preserved its capacity of action.

In fact, in Argentina, labor was the principal opposition to the first democratic government, that of radical Alfonsín and to the government of De la Rúa that ended in 2001 in economic and political crisis. The peronistas negotiated with and resisted the liberal *justicialista* Menem government and have become a crucial partner in the Kirchner and Fernández governments (Palomino y Trajtenberg, 2006). The fact that after the 2001 crisis, unionism was one of the best organized actors, obliged the Kirchner government to ally with it. This government appointed a pro labor lawyer to the Ministry of Labor, who promoted collective negotiations at the branch level, encouraged

the formalization of the labor market, raised real salaries (both minimal and median) and eventually re-nationalized the pension funds (in 2008) in order to attract union support, but also as a way to strengthen the internal market. This reinforced the *peronist* CGT, which reunited after having split during the Menem presidencies due to disagreements over the position to be taken with respect to its liberal measures; while part of the CGT considered that it should negotiate with the government, another thought it should oppose the measures (Palomino, 2000).

In Brazil, during the government of Cardoso, the labor movement was able to resist the more radical neo-liberal measures, like the pension reform, and entered into a partnership with the employers and the State in the tripartite “*cámaras sectoriais*”. These organizations were implemented in the most important branches of the economy and served to negotiate salaries, prices and taxes in order to stimulate growth (De Souza Keller, 1994). During the Lula presidencies (2002-2010), several temporary or permanent tripartite counsels, were created to discuss certain measures or laws that were to affect the interests of workers, such as the Socio-Economic Counsel and the forums to discuss the pension and the labor law reform, (Riethof, 2004).

There are other traditional movements and organizations that have persisted. One example is the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra*, that demands an agrarian reform in a country, that has never had one, and the unionization of the rural workers. This movement was founded in 1985 and increased its force in the renewed agrarian conflicts of the new democracy. The pressures upon the democratic governments made Brazilian society conscious of the unjust distribution of land that existed in their country and the living conditions of many rural workers, which in some regions included slavery. This organization managed to set the agrarian reform in the political agenda and obliged the presidency of Cardoso to distribute land to 570,000 families and the Lula government to around 100,000 families per year. On the other hand, rural workers have been actively organizing in unions, most of them in the CUT, ideologically close to the governing PT.¹

Nonetheless, there has been a clear shift from the demands of labor and other socio-political actors oriented the distribution of wealth and political power of the fifties and sixties, the end of the military regimes of the seventies and eighties; led by the labor union and other popular

¹ <http://www.mst.org.br/mst/home.php>

organizations, to claims against neoliberalism of new social actors in the 90's and 2000. Although one can interpret these movements as reactions to the situation created by the retreat of the State and by the neo-liberal economic model in terms of increased inequality and social insecurity (Silva, 2010), they share crucial characteristics that point beyond this reaction. They surely profited from the occasion to reject the social effects of neo-liberalism, as the Zapatista uprising did in Mexico, the Indian movement in Ecuador and Bolivia, the *piqueteros* and other spontaneous movements in Argentina, the CUT and the *Sem Terra* in Brazil, nonetheless the most crucial significance of their action are their claims in terms of respect of human rights, rights to define their collective identity in ethnic, religious, linguistic terms, the rights of citizens to work, health, education, security, as well as their right to decide upon the way individuals make use of their body, their sexuality, their subjective dignity.

2. New types of movements and social actions.

Facing the decline of the most significant historical actor in Latin America, we have witnessed the emergence of new social actors. One of these are the organizations of civic society or ONGs, that appeared quite

massively in most Latin American countries as a result of the retreat of the State and the decrease in social spending. The increased fragility of the population due to human rights abuses of the South cone military dictatorships and to the neo-liberal economic model, in the seventies and eighties, saw the appearance of ONG's as a way to alleviate the needs of the population. These organizations emerged as a grass roots response to social needs, as a "defensive" reaction of society, in contrast to more proactive actions such as interests, identities and projects we will discuss later. What is also called the "third sector" or the ONG movement tried to protect society from State terrorism or replace State social policies. With the return to democracy and the renewed social policies, many governments in quest for legitimacy instrumentalized these organizations as a way of making their policies more efficient. Democratically elected governments promoted leaders of these organizations to head the social policies institutions or channeled their activities through them. In many cases this led to the weakening and loss of autonomy of these organizations that had emerged from below as actors but were now responding to State initiatives and had thus become its agents. This happened more frequently in countries governed by rightist or center-left parties that were applying orthodox liberal

policies, such as Chile and Mexico. In both, the instrumentalization of the ONG's was a manner both of gaining efficiency and legitimacy.

In other political context like the elaboration of the Brazilian 1988 Constitution, some ONG's managed to make the transition from a purely defensive action to a more proactive one. Other movements we can mention are the human rights associations and movements that emerged during the South cone dictatorships that were crucial to exert pressure for the return of democracy. Other associations and social actors were oriented towards rights rather than the granting of concessions, and demanded the right to work, to social security, health, a safe environment, among others.

An important array of associations and organizations dedicated to claim for rights developed in Argentina regarding work, health, social security, etc. These movements as Perruzotti (2002) and Smulovitz (2007) suppose a fundamental change in the character of socialization that characterized the continent during the national-popular period when politization was the rule. The human rights movement that emerged during the military government was crucial to explain this transformation. It led to the first victory of the radical party against the *peronistas*, with Alfonsín at its head, and had a

durable effect on the social organizations in Argentina (Smulovitz, 2007). Under its influence, many of the movements in this country emerged in democracy as a reaction to the effects of neo-liberalism during the Menem administration and the economic, social and political crisis of 2001-2002, did not orient their demands to assistance from the government, but demanded rights. The movement for human rights managed to survive by transforming itself into movements demanding the right to know what had happened to the thousands of disappeared during the dictatorship and the children that were abducted by the military. The children of the disappeared organized to know the destiny of their parents, led the "*escraches*", manifestations where slogans were drawn in front of the residences of the military that were not taken to trial. During the 2001-2002 crisis, there emerged a considerable repertory of other types of social actions: the "*cacerolazos*", as well as the spontaneous assemblies at street corners, called "*asambleas de barrio*". Although these actions were less numerous than the ONG's, the sense of their action has allowed them to acquire a considerable social and political impact (Smulovitz; 2007).

The *piquetero* movements and the factory occupations that occurred in Argentina are another example of a movement demanding rights, in this case

the right to work. The first one began with the protests against the closure of State industrial plants by the Menem governments in the south of the country (Neuquen, Salta and Jujuy) that were in many cases the only source of employment. Their repertory consisted of generalized revolts of small towns (puebladas) and road blockings. These movements increased with the impressive growth of unemployment that occurred from the early 90's to the crisis of 2001: from 15% in 1992 to 40% in the wake of the crisis. During the next years and especially during the De la Rúa government that led to the 2001 crisis, these movements extended to the rest of the country and especially to the Buenos Aires region, where the results of the neo-liberal economic model had been more dramatic and concerned mainly private enterprises (Svampa and Pereyra, 2004). This situation did not only lead to this broad unemployed movement but also to the occupation of hundreds of plants that had been closed by their owners in order to run cooperatively by the workers themselves. Although all these movements were reacting to the consequences of neo-liberalism (Silva, 2010), their sense goes well beyond this reaction as their main demand was proactive the right to work. The significance these movements gave their action appears more clearly when we analyze the character of the social programs implemented in response.

The original plan “*Trabajar*”² differed from the assistance programs applied in the rest of Latin America; it consisted in temporary employment in communal tasks such as the building or rehabilitation of roads, clinics, schools, etc., rather than in a monetary allowance with no financial or labor contribution (Weitz-Schapiro, 2006).

The two waves of student mobilization in Chile, that of the secondary students in 2006 and that of university students of 2011, is also representative of these kinds of action. Both of these mobilizations mark a fundamental rupture with respect to social action in Chile, which had always been intertwined with political parties that were the main channels of socio-political participation in Chile. For the first time in Chile’s history, a social movement acted with total autonomy from the political parties and in fact rejected them (Garretón, 2009). Both movements were set against one of the main “social” enclaves of the Pinochet dictatorship, the educational system, where little had been reformed by the democratic *Concertación* governments that had concentrated on pensions and health. The young were manifesting against an education model where both public and private schools and universities charged significant fees and obliged the students and

² That was during the Kirchner government, converted into a more orthodox and more easily “clientelized” purely assistance and means tested program: *Jefes y Jefas de Hogar*”.

their parents to contract loans that implied a heavy burden for years to come. They were demanding that education be considered a social right and rather than a merchandise.

The inefficiency of the judicial system and the corruption of the police forces in most countries of Latin America that has led to an almost total impunity, aggravated by the increase of the violence staged by drug and other illegal activities and the repressive policy of some Latin American governments, have given birth to more or less massive and spontaneous actions demanding security. In many occasions these actions have been sparked by a hideous crime, such as the one of Axel Blumberg in Argentina in 2004, the son of a well-known Mexican entrepreneur, Alejandro Martí, in 2009, and the more recent assassination of the son of Javier Sicilia, a well-known Mexican poet together with seven other youngsters. In the case of Mexico these movements have suffered a transformation, from actions against insecurity, where the demand was oriented that State impose its force, to another that is critical of the repressive and militaristic policies of the government, that is demanding a deliberation on alternative solutions to the problem of violence and more recently, with the impressive increase of deaths (more than 50,000) in the fight against drugs of the Mexican

government of Calderon, the right to know the details of each one of these deaths and an end to the mere statistics that the government gives that only enhances impunity and the loss of the value of life.

In the last two decades we have seen a significant increase of the ecological movements in many regions of the Continent. These have surged against the construction of water dams in the Chilean Patagonia and in many regions of Mexico, against cellulose plants in Uruguay and Argentina, toxic waste reservoirs in San Luis Potosi in Mexico, polluting plants in Tlaxcala and the northern frontier. Some of these actions have been raised by populations that have suffered serious health disorders and are demanding retribution, others are located in the context of the preservation of Indian territories, so we have been more proactive and demand the right for individuals to have control on the risks that are imposed upon them by private or public industrial or other types of projects (Pleyers, 2010 and Velazquez, 2010). They are thus also set within the context of a struggle to define social rights, as well as defining collective and subjective identity.

Democratization in Brazil set the context for many ONG's to transform their actions from attending social needs to demanding rights. The fact that

civic society was crucial to assure democratization in Brazil and that contrary to what happened in Chile and Mexico society was not demobilized after the transition, together with the fact that the country was characterized by a very open process of rewriting the Constitution resulted in a very active social participation. The 1988 Brazilian Constitution was not written by a congressional commission or exclusively by Congress, but it included the possibility that any group that could collect 100,000 signatures could submit articles that would have to be discussed in Congress. For the first time in the history of Brazil and (probably) of Latin America, the population and not only the political elite was able to participate in an active manner in the elaboration of the Constitution (Chaves Texeira, *et. al.*). This resulted in very intense discussions among organizations, associations, academics for almost three years (1986-1988), in almost all the localities of the country in order to elaborate articles to be submitted to Congress (*Ibid.*). This process not only gave birth to a very progressive Constitution that serves as reference for the political actors but it enhanced the organizations and associations of civic society and helped form durable nets between them.

This process not only led to the emergence of movements demanding rights, it developed a critical view of the limits of liberal democracy, that

contrary the position of the revolutionary groups in the 50 and 60 that posed the substitution of “formal” democracy by “real” democracy, in this case it led to a process of deepening democracy in the direction of deliberative and participative democracy (Held, 2006). The fact that the PT, a party created by the “new unionism”, the Christian “comunidades de base” and different leftist (communist, Trotskyists, Maoists) groups, consolidated during the transition and remained as opposition for more than twenty years prevented it to be “neutralized” as did Solidarity in Poland when it arrived to power just after the transition and the *peronistas* in Argentina during the Menem government. The fact that the PT remained out national power allowed it to maintain its active connection to unions and other social actors and to innovate its public policies in the municipalities it conquered in order to distinguish itself from the governing party. The PT implement the celebrated participatory budget, that became a window of opportunity for civic action at the municipal level and signified the decline of clientelism (a widespread characteristic of Brazilian politics) in those localities where it was imposed.

According to Arvitzer, before the existence of the participatory budget in Belo Horizonte, 60% of the people interviewed declared they benefited from the personal relations they maintained with political figures, while

afterwards its implementation this percentage was reduced to nothing. In Porto Alegre the percentage went from 41% to zero (Arvitzter, 2002). Although it is true that in some cases the same clientelistic leaders adapted to the new system and managed to lead the assemblies where the distribution of resources was decided, (Abers, 2000), they succeeded to do so by transforming their action in important ways.

All of the movements described so far, regarding needs, rights and the deepening of democracy, situate themselves within the limits of the existing institutions of society because they accepted these limits. Whereas the action of the NGO's can be considered to fill the gaps these institutions do not cover, they pose as their task what is not accomplished by the existing institutions, the social rights movements fights to inscribe certain actions of the State as rights. The actions seeking to deepen democracy are situated at the limits of the democratic institutions, and fight to extend them. The movements we will discuss now go beyond the existing limits of the institutions of society. This is clearly the case of the demand of cultural rights of minorities in societies that are conceived as homogenous in ethnical or ethical terms. The Indian movement is situated in the first of these

dimensions, while the subjective rights movements (gender, divorce, abortion and gay rights) in the second.

Most of the Indian movements in Latin America demanded the recognition of their identity, the right to be different of all the other groups of their respective national societies, without excluding any. They were affirmative identities with no exclusionary character, in contrast to the identity movements in other parts of the world that define themselves in exclusion to the other. Although the indigenous movement got international recognition with the Zapatista rebellion of 1994 in Mexico, the social actions rejecting the assimilationist policies the Latin American governments had been implementing during most part of the twentieth century began in Ecuador and Bolivia in the seventies. In most cases, these movements were sustained by leftist church representatives, participating of the theology of liberation movement. In the amazon region of Ecuador, what began as a movement against the intervention of the oil companies in Indian regions transformed into a cultural movement, that merged a nationality at the *Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana (Confeniae)*, which according to Albo, was the first Indian organization to adopt the term nation (Albo, X., 2004). In Bolivia, the Katarista movement

that developed during the sixties and seventies, began as a peasant organization demanding land. This movement fused with other social movements in 1979 to found the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (Cstucb)*, that was crucial to assure the election of Evo Morales as the first Indian president of a majoritarian Indian country as Bolivia more than twenty years later. (Ibid.)

Although these indigenous movements actively intervened against neo-liberal measures such as the signing of NAFTA between Mexico, the US and Canada, against selling gas to foreign companies and the price of water charged by private companies in Bolivia and the dollarization of the economy of Ecuador, the sense of these movements went beyond these socio-economic actions in order to orient itself towards the recognition of the right to be different without rejecting the larger national structure. The actions against neo-liberal measures were in a sense a window of opportunity to intervene in the social stage. This had different results: in the case of Mexico, the EZLN was a crucial catalyst of the democratic transition, although it did not directly intervene in the political scene and in fact rejected it; in the case of Ecuador it led to the defeat of the Indian movement, when it allied with the military that staged a coup against the corrupt and inefficient albeit

government of Bucaram. In the case of Bolivia, the popular participation in the so-called gas and water “wars” and the organization of a union of coca producers in the region of the Chaparé, that contested the settlements between the Bolivian and the U.S. governments to eradicate the coca plantations, set the stage for the election of its leader Evo Morales to the presidency of Bolivia in 2006. In all these cases the protest against the economic model went far beyond economics and was in fact instrumentalized to affirm the indigenous identity and the rights for these populations: socio-economic, cultural, political, and in some cases territorial (Le Bot, 2009). These movements question the ethnical limits of the institutions that society established under the idea of homogeneity.

In contrast to these collective actions that have given rise to massive and well organized movements in some countries of Latin America with a significant Indian population, in all of the countries of the continent arose smaller, more atomized but very visible movements demanding equal rights for women, the right to divorce, to have control of their bodies, notably when to abort. These actions have been accompanied by others led by sexual minorities, demanding the right not to be discriminated upon, to be treated as equal, the right to marry, to adopt, etc. Finally, some ecological and alter

globalization movements, that define alternative manners of conceiving modernization, of consuming goods and services, using the existing means of communication, technological advances and in general the power of knowledge, than the one that has been promoted up to now by governments and enterprises (Pleyers, 2010). All of these actions go beyond the limits of the existing institutions of society; they affirm the subject vis-à-vis the political, social and economic order, they pose an alternative conception of life that goes beyond the dominant ethics.

Concluding remarks.

The new social movements emerging after democratization and in the context of globalization diverge in important manners from those that existed before. In the sixties, seventies and early eighties, the dominant movement was labor and other socio-political actors that oriented their action towards concessions from the State and that were accessible to be coopted by obtaining it. These interests were in general well organized and centralized, and acted both at the social and at the political level.

Since the 80's Latin America has seen the emergence of a great number of organizations (or associations) of civic society dedicated to tackle many of

the problems and needs of different sectors of society caused by the retreat of the State. Some of these organizations were instrumentalized by the governments in order to apply their public policies more efficiently. Those of them that preserved their autonomy have led the quest for the recognition of rights.

We have seen the emergence of more grass roots, atomized social actors that demand rights and pose a different ethnical and ethical conception of society, rather than concessions from the dominant forces of society. Their demands are mostly social or cultural as they do not pretend political power or the overthrow of the State, they are “self-limited” in the sense of Touraine (1982) and Arato (2000). This is clearly the case of the indigenous human rights, women rights, sexual minority rights and alter globalization movements that are demanding the right to be and act differently, the recognition of their subjective, cultural, ethnic, religious identity.

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