

Latin American Social Movements

*Globalization, Democratization,
and Transnational Networks*

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2006

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Oxford

Chapter 1

NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION AND POPULAR MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

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Throughout Latin America, social and political protests seem to be occurring with greater frequency and intensity, and under the banner of new demands, claims, and repertoires of contention. Globalization processes, especially the effects of neoliberal economic policies, serve as the catalysts of many of these protests. These macro-processes are often perceived as threats in the immediate political and social environments of affected groups (Tilly 1978; Goldstone and Tilly 2001). The *negative* conditions typically associated with “austerity” measures and neoliberal policies are numerous, but a short list must include the following: rising costs of living, cuts in social services, informalization and fragmentation of national economies, ponderous foreign debt, hyperurbanization and, for many workers, low wages, harsh working conditions, and insecure employment in newly privatized enterprises and export processing zones. Under such conditions, aggrieved collectivities begin to act in concert in order to avoid being made worse off by the unwanted economic changes (Walton and Shefner 1994; Veltmeyer and Petras 2000) or in reaction to violation of their perceived social citizenship rights (Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley 2003).

However, the existence of economic grievances and social claims by themselves do not explain the unprecedented wave of Latin American popular protest in the last decade. A full understanding must consider other processes at work, some of which occur in tandem with economic globalization, such as the growth of transnational non-governmental organizations, transnational advocacy networks, and global communications and information exchange. Another key process is democratization: the opening of Latin American polities, more competitive elections, and the slow and sometimes fitful creation of new channels for grievance articulation and the waning of old ones.

This book deepens our understanding of popular mobilizations in several different Latin American countries by looking at the intersection of these three themes: neoliberal economic globalization and how it affects the articulation of claims, democratization and the opening of political opportunities for challenging groups, and the networks of advocacy and support organized on a transnational scale.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

While social movement researchers have given considerable attention to globalization processes, the tendency has been to focus on only one of these three themes: namely, the rise of transnational actors and their effects on national arenas of contention (Tarrow 2005a, 2005b; Rothman and Oliver 1999; Lewis 2000). The number of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), transnational social movements (TSMOs), and linkages between transnational activists expanded rapidly in the 1990s, establishing new and significant players on a global scale. Sikkink and Smith observed a 300 percent increase in the number of these organizations between 1973 and 1993 (Sikkink and Smith 2002: 31). These groups and organizations worked at an international level to establish human rights, democracy, women's rights, and environmental protection regimes and exerted pressure on national politics to conform to emerging global norms in exchange for a place in the interstate system (Smith 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998a, Smith and Johnston 2002). For example, human rights accords and their monitoring by TSMOs such as Amnesty International can confer a modicum of legitimacy to newly industrializing states in the global South to assuage first-world consumers and transnational subcontractors. These global players, their operations, and their resources are mostly located in the global North and it is fair to say that their influence is mostly exerted at the policy level rather than in popular mobilizations.

A related tendency of social movement research has been to focus on the anti-neoliberal globalization movement (or global justice movement), which also primarily has developed in the global North (J. Smith 2001b). These studies look at the transnational organization and participation in protest events (Bédoyan, Van Aelst, and Walgrave 2004) and campaigns (Tarrow 2005a) directed at the main agencies of neoliberal policies, such as the IMF, World Bank, G-8 meetings, and WTO rounds (Almeida and Lichbach 2003; Fisher et al. 2005). Also relevant here is the growth of radical-democracy elements of the global justice movement such as the various social forums in different countries (della Porta 2005). While this research is important, the result has been, first, that theories of protest mobilization tend to deemphasize those precise locales where the negative impacts of globalization are most directly felt; and second, that theories of protest mobilization in general tend to de-emphasize how national politics outside the global North are structured by the system of global dependency.

The other side of the coin is that scholarship on global economic dependency has paid little attention to popular mobilizations in the developing world. Dependency theory (Frank 1978, 1980; Amin 1976) and world-system theory (Wallerstein 1974; Chase Dunn 1992; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1993) focus on the unequal and exploitative nature of global economic relationships and their effects on national economies and societies. However, it is fair to say that, with respect to collective action, the dependency perspective did not move far beyond the basic equation that surplus extraction by the West plus anti-imperialist ideology plus revolutionary organizations equal popular insurgencies (see Wickham-Crowley 2001). World-system theory itself says little about collective action: it links labor unrest and labor peace to hegemonic cycles; and some schol-

ars have proposed the general pattern that social and political movements are associated with hegemonic descent. It also proposes a relationship between world-system position and political contention by associating the prosperity of core status with a growing middle class that finds political expression in democratic institutions. At the same time, national elites find political legitimacy in electoral processes and stronger guarantees of civic and human rights, with the result that civil unrest is quelled. Conversely, state repression and lack of basic freedoms are associated with underdeveloped peripheral states, where insurgencies, coups d'état, and revolutionary movements tend to be more common (Goodwin 2001).

Since the 1970s empirical trends in Latin America (and elsewhere) have complicated the broad categories of dependency and world-system theories and have given rise to numerous popular mobilizations that fall outside their theoretical schemata. First, several Latin American states came to occupy a middle level in the global division of labor—becoming *newly industrializing states*, or NICs (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile)—or in world-system lexicon, semiperiphery. It was precisely in these countries that some of the major mobilizations against neoliberal reforms occurred, but also—it is fair to say—that the semiperiphery is probably the most understudied and undertheorized economic region in world system theory, and there is limited research about the unique shape of popular mobilization there (but see Jenkins and Schock 1992; Boswell and Chase-Dunn 2000).

For decades, the economies of Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile were characterized by import substitution industrialization (ISI) as a developmental strategy, which privileged urban workers and created large urban-rural disparities. By the 1980s, protectionist ISI policies were rejected in favor of free-trade, export-oriented industrialization (EOI), with significant effects on traditional political and class alignments. Old clientelist foundations of state legitimacy and social control eroded and were replaced by networks of more autonomous citizens and civic organizations that emerged and grew as political democratization occurred throughout Latin America. As industrialization and democratization moved forward (Chile being the anomalous case), dependency and world-system theories offered little theoretical guidance to understand the social and political movements that developed at the same time. Prior to 1970, economic injustice had always been linked with restriction of political freedoms, and the macroscopic theorizing of both dependency and world system approaches left little room for the unique historical and social environment of Latin America, such as clientelism, national political cultures, and the social configurations of ISI development. Similarly, because the field of social and political movements developed almost entirely out of the analysis of Western political contexts, there was equally little space for Latin American structural and cultural uniqueness (Davis 1999). The result was that the eruptions of austerity protests in these countries and elsewhere were both unexpected and undertheorized.

A second complicating trend in Latin America was the rapid growth of debt in the late 1970s as countries borrowed to underwrite domestic spending and finance state enterprises for ISI development. By the early 1980s, a global recession, floating interest rates and falling commodity prices—frequently combined with bad planning and corruption—made it impossible for most countries to meet payment schedules, leading to debt crisis in Latin America (see Roddick 1988; Pastor 1989; Walton and Seddon 1994 for detailed discussions). Since around 1980, global financial institutions (such as the IMF and World Bank) and trade organizations have exerted increasing pressure to abandon ISI policies and open national economies to global market forces (Green 2003).

Indebted Latin American states were structurally dependent on these financial institutions to ensure future capital flows into their respective national territories and economies (i.e., new loans, foreign investment, and favorable credit ratings). The externally imposed structural adjustments included cutting back domestic national budgets/expenditures—especially in the public sector workforces and wages, subsidies to basic food and transportation, as well as in the education, public health, and retirement/pension sectors. In addition, governments were instructed to devalue their local currencies and sell off productive state assets such as government-run industries and infrastructure (e.g., mines, natural resource deposits, ports, telecommunications, power and water distribution, healthcare services, etc.) and use the privatization receipts to make debt repayments or at least to pay the interest on previous loans.

State managers in Latin America were also strongly encouraged by the IFIs to find other sources to generate revenue such as increasing the sales tax (or value-added tax) on most consumer items (Babb 2005). This particular neoliberal policy is widely viewed by the popular sectors as a regressive taxing measure in a region where over 45 percent of the population lives at or under the poverty line (Figueroa Ibarra 2002; Robinson 2004). Another neoliberal economic development strategy, found largely in the Caribbean basin countries (Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean), is to establish free trade zones for light export manufacturing (Robinson 2003). In this case, the neoliberal state itself actively constructed new social actors for potential contention by concentrating large numbers of young women in similar social and economic production relations (see the Bandy and Bickham-Mendez chapter in this volume). The ultimate objective of the above programs and policies centers on making the Latin American economies more outward-oriented, focusing on the export sector and developing specific niche products to compete effectively in international markets. In accord with this extraverted economic approach, governments are given incentives to liberalize their national economic laws and engage in bilateral and multilateral free trade accords.

DEBT, INTERVENTION, AND AUSTERITY PROTESTS

With some important exceptions, the major mobilization campaigns witnessed in Latin America over the past decade have focused on economic issues directly or indirectly connected to the foreign debt crisis, structural adjustment policies, and global economic integration. The *Argentinazo* of December 2001 (looting and mass demonstrations including pot banging—*cacerolazos*—against state-mandated bank freezes and other unfavorable policies), the indigenous uprising in Ecuador in January 2000 against an impending dollarization of the economy (Walsh 2001), the ongoing water and gas wars in Bolivia in 2000, 2003, and 2005 (privatization of utilities and natural resources), and the free trade protests in Central America and Ecuador between 2002 and 2006 are easily traceable to economic liberalization policies. It is interesting to note that these are all mass-based movements bringing tens of thousands of people into the streets (and at times highways) in order to prevent, slow down, or renegotiate the unwanted economic changes. In order to explain the variation in how these macro-economic threats lead to different levels of contention, however, we need an understanding of how larger global pressures intersect with local political conditions—or what Javier Auyero (2001) calls “glocal” political struggles.

These collective actions have variously been labeled anti-austerity protests, food riots, or anti-IMF protests. The earliest protests against austerity measures began in the mid-1970s. They were not limited to Latin America, but no other region of the world experienced as many cost-of-living-related protests, and some of largest erupted there.

There were a total of 146 protest events globally between 1976 and late 1992 occurring in almost one-half of the debtor countries worldwide and especially frequent and intense in Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, and Venezuela. The vast majority occurred in cities (see Walton 1989; Walton and Seddon 1994; Walton and Shefner 1994). Early research observed a peak between 1983 and 1985, when the international debt crisis and IMF intervention also peaked. After an apparent lull during the early 1990s, it is impressive that this trend seems to have either reemerged or intensified into the late 1990s and early 2000s (Almeida 2002).

It is significant that, prior to the IMF austerity programs, there was a marked absence of popular uprisings in Latin American countries where economic hardships and belt-tightening were common (Walton and Seddon 1994: 44). Key elements in the first wave of protests seem to have been hyperurbanization and intrusion of international agencies in national politics and national economic planning. According to Walton and Ragin (1990), other plausible causes such as size of debt, rapid inflation, export dependency, and level of industrialization did not significantly predict protest events. They observe that austerity protests were highly correlated with a lack of prior uprisings, the absence of face-value deprivation as measured by indexes of economic development and inflation, and IMF intervention. These findings suggest the diffusion of a globally informed way of interpreting price hikes, social service cuts, or unemployment that specifies the IMF, other international agencies, and transnational corporations as key antagonists. Also, they suggest that this interpretive frame links outside intervention with the delegitimization of local and national political elites. Many of the riots had an element whereby participants attacked government buildings and vilified local politicians (see Auyero's chapter in this volume). Dense urban networks provided the structural and practical context for rapid mobilization of people into the streets when price increases were announced. The level of spontaneity varied according to the particular outburst, but it was common, and still is, that some organizational involvement helped mobilize the vast numbers of participants—labor unions, civic associations, neighborhood associations, and nascent or emergent social movement organizations.

Social histories of food riots occurring in the eighteenth century point to a moral economy of rights and obligations associated with traditional social structure that articulated the townsfolk's sense of injustice. This moral economy held immediate antagonists—local millers and merchants—to blame for the "abandonment of consumer protections in free-market reforms that served the centralization of capital and state power" (Walton and Seddon 1994: 52). We mention this because contemporary austerity programs also interrupt established social relations and daily routines (see Auyero's and Wolford's chapters). The key difference is that the IMF and World Bank are distant forces, not the local merchants and tradesmen encountered every day. Since the 1980s, an anti-globalization master frame has become a powerful lens through which to view local grievances. It incorporates the local moral economy of aggrieved populations within a larger and sophisticated schema of understandings about the global economy. The rise of TSMOs and INGOs has been one factor in the master frame's diffusion. Another factor is an expanding web of transnational activist linkages (Keck and Sikkink, 1998a; Caniglia 2001; and Olesen's chapter). Finally, local activists, opposition politicians, and labor leaders have further elaborated the frame by identifying the ties of IMF, World Bank, and transnational corporate managers with national elites, thereby providing close-range targets for collective action.

While there is a great deal to be learned by aggregating austerity riots and analyzing them in terms of broad measures of economic and political trends, (see chapter 2 by

Shefner, Pasdirtz, and Blad), there also is much to be gained from a more fine-grained approach to Latin American social movements (see Wolford's chapter for elaboration of this argument). To this end, Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley (2003) have identified several areas in terms of moral economy of rights that are threatened by neoliberal globalization (see also Eckstein 2001a, 2001b for related inventories). Drawing on their discussion of how basic "subsistence rights" are challenged by neoliberal adjustments (Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley 2003: 11), several patterns within the category of austerity protests and austerity-inspired social movements can be identified. Of course, all are related to neoliberal policy adjustments in one way or another, but it is noteworthy that closer inspections reveal that—in varying degrees—not all of these protests are spontaneous outbursts in reaction to suddenly imposed deprivation, but rather are given form and motion, at least in early stages, by preexisting organizations and civil society groups. What we present is a short list of major categories of social movements that are most directly related to neoliberal policies—it is not intended to be exhaustive (see Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley 2003 for elaborations).¹

Protests against Cuts in Urban Services. The category of urban services includes public transportation (in which fare hikes can cause real hardships for the poor), provision of electricity, water, and sanitation, cost of fuel, public health, food subsidies, housing, and even the security of banking services (which are especially relevant for the urban middle and working classes). It is fair to say that this category can claim the largest and most violent outbursts of protest, such as the *caracazo* in Venezuela (see Lopez-Maya and Lander's chapter) and the numerous outbursts in Argentina, including the *Argentinazo* in 2001 (see Auyero's chapter in this volume). While superficially appearing to be spontaneous riots, and certainly there is often a spontaneous quality to their development, many of these protests have labor, leftist political parties, and neighborhood civic groups playing mobilizing roles as well (see Almeida's chapter 4). For example in 2000, during the protests in Cochabamba, Bolivia, against the privatization of municipal water services, civil society groups made a decisive contribution in sustaining mobilization (Albro 2005).

Also significant under this category are movements for adequate housing. Squatter invasions in the semiurban periphery had been a widespread form of mobilization in Latin America that were tolerated by regimes fostering ISI development based on an urban labor force (see Holzner's chapter 5). Although many squatters' movements tapered off in the 1990s, urban housing movements remained, especially in Mexico City (building on organizations created after the 1985 earthquakes there) and in Brazil, where the Roofless Peoples Movement mobilized in several cities (Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley 2003: 20). A sister *Movimiento Sin Techo* movement has also mobilized thousands in Paraguay, and by 2001 claimed urban land and building occupations sufficient to house 2,000 families.

Strikes and Labor Struggles. Unions continue to be a significant presence in Latin American society, but the recent trend is that popular mobilization is less and less union-inspired. Corporatist unions enjoyed a privileged place under ISI development policies and were often the transmission belts of regime-supported social mobilization. When regime change occurred, union organizations remained as forces to be reckoned with and frequently provided preexisting networks for protest mobilization. While the strength and scope of operation for unions varied during the neoliberal period, waning under military governments, waxing initially after democratic transition, they have consistently resisted neoliberal policies on two fronts: the privatization of national enterprises and the suspension of labor rights in EPZ manufacturing. In the case of privatization, it is typical that the guarantees of minimum wage, employment, health and

safety, hours, and pension are either threatened or suspended in the transfer. In the case of EPZ—or *maquila*—manufacturing, it is common that in addition to tax breaks and guarantees of infrastructural development, states grant concessions, either explicit or tacit, against union organizing so that wages remain low (Armbruster-Sandoval 2005). As Bandy and Mendez's chapter in this volume demonstrates, the combined effects of transnational solidarity networks and local shopfloor organization can successfully counter the anti-union efforts of the *maquila* sector.

Gender-based movements. While the subordination of Latin American women by traditional cultural patterns of patriarchy and male privilege is well known, significant political and economic changes have broken women's quiescence in many sectors and, where women's activism has been historically evident, given rise to new patterns of mobilization. Earlier, during the 1960s and 1970s, Latin American women participated in the revolutionary insurgencies that were common throughout the region (Shayne 2004). Later, during the first wave of structural adjustments, urban women were often at the forefront of protests against curtailment of services and rural women were active in development claims (Nash and Safa 1986). Also, women's activism was significant in protesting against the brutal repression of military regimes and demanding transition to democracy. In Chile, Noonan (1995) notes how the military coup created new spaces for women's mobilization based on traditional conceptions of motherhood, but which soon expanded to include demands for democratic return. Women were instrumental in protests against the dictatorship and also against the regime's neoliberal shock therapy for the Chilean economy. In Argentina, the Madres movement became emblematic of women's concerns for basic human freedoms of life and liberty as they demanded accountability for their children who disappeared under military repression. Borland's chapter in this volume chronicles how today's Madres movement has expanded its scope after the democratic transition to include economic justice claims. Finally, the extension of *maquila* production in EPZs has raised new issues for women. *Maquila* production overwhelmingly draws upon women as a cheap and flexible labor source and it is common that unions are prohibited or co-opted by corporatist (and male-dominated) national unions (Tiano 1994). This is translated into low wages, lack of job security and dangerous and exploitative working conditions (Sklair 1989, 1995; Bailey, Parisotto, and Renshaw 1993). Bandy and Bickman Mendez's chapter focuses on how labor demands in the *maquila* industry are overwhelmingly women's issues, and how they draw upon transnational labor and feminist networks to press their claims.

Rural movements. This category refers to mostly rural claims such as demands for land and/or land seizures, price supports, water rights and development, agricultural loans, crop subsidies, and communal land access. As peasant-based guerrilla movements decrease (with the exception of Colombia), new rural movements have appeared to voice claims against neoliberal restructuring in agriculture and development policies, often taking the form of protests against displacement from land by large development projects, especially dams, and restriction of access to means of livelihood—such as rural landless workers movement, the rubber tappers movement in Brazil, and the *co-cacalero* movement in Bolivia. Because indigenous populations are mostly rural, these economic claims are often overlaid with ethnic-identity and cultural-diversity claims that have become part of a master indigenous-rights frame. Although indigenous movements are not new in Latin America—for example, Bolivia's Katarista movement in the 1960s had strong cultural and identity elements—the number, strength, and tactics of indigenous movements since the 1980s are noteworthy (Yashar 2005). Especially significant is the pressure various indigenous movements have been able to exert

on central governments via their adeptness at developing transnational solidarity networks and drawing upon resources of TSMOs.

Land ownership throughout Latin America tends to be highly concentrated, which has spurred class-based insurgencies, land seizures, and revolutions for decades, but agricultural restructuring policies under neoliberalism impart even greater advantages to large landowners and further squeeze small peasant farmers. The mostly mestizo-based Movement of Rural Landless Workers (*Movimento Dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, or simply MST) is arguably the largest social movement in contemporary Latin America (Wright and Wolford 2003). Beginning in 1984, 250,000 land occupations have been initiated by MST. Brazil's agricultural restructuring caused thousands of families to be cast off the land they had worked, and thousands more rural workers were left idle by agroindustrial concentration and mechanization. The MST movement arose with the simple repertoire of seizing idle land from large landholders and expanded to demand social welfare rights such as health care, education, and services. The MST movement was also able to draw some transnational support, especially via international linkages with Christian churches and charitable organizations (Mainwaring 1986). Wolford's chapter in this volume traces the individual decisions that swelled the ranks of the MST during the late 1980s and 1990s. Since 2000, an MST movement has expanded in rural Bolivia after the Agrarian Reform Institute ceased legally recognizing new land settlements in the late 1990s.

In Brazil, the rubber tappers' movement was able to develop strong transnational linkages by merging its claims with environmental and indigenous rights issues—patterns exhibited by other rural movements. By the mid-1970s, the livelihood of rubber tappers was pressured by land encroachment from the development of the Amazon region, especially loss of forest due to ranching and agriculture encouraged by Brazilian development projects. The movement itself began as a class-based movement but shifted its focus to reflect environmental issues. Conservationists in Washington, D.C., concerned about rainforest loss were among the first to raise awareness of the rubber tappers' plight. Later, activists of the Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, and Charles Steward Mott Foundation began to work with the movement to pressure the World Bank for sustainable development programs (see Keck and Sikkink 1998a: 133-144). A similar pattern was evident in Brazil's anti-dam movement, which began in 1979 to press claims by peasants displaced by large projects in the Uruguai river basin but which later cultivated ties with environmental NGOs to leverage influence at the national and local levels (Rothman and Oliver 1999).²

Indigenous movements combine claims for political and cultural rights with a cosmopolitan awareness of how their grievances are linked with neoliberal globalization. At the end of 2005 in Bolivia, such a synthesis propelled Evo Morales to the presidency backed with the largest electoral majority in the country's recent history. Indigenous groups also incorporate strategies that develop links with TSMOs and cultivate global solidarity with related movements and with "conscience constituents" in the global North (McCarthy and Zald 1977). The movements that follow this general pattern are many and include *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE), the Zapatista rebellion in Mexico, indigenous organizations in Ecuador's and Bolivia's Amazon region, the San Blas Kuna rights mobilizations in Panama, the *Movimiento Indígena Pachacutik* in Ecuador, Yanomami mobilizations in the Amazon region of Brazil, indigenous protests in Bolivia among *altiplano* Aymara and Quechua groups and pan-Mayan communities in Guatemala (see Stewart's chapter in this volume).

Ecuador's "national indigenous uprising" (*el levantamiento nacional indigena*)—as it came to be called—is representative of this form of contention. In June 1990, tens of thousands of highland Indians in Ecuador staged a spectacular national protest. Growing out of a nationally coordinated indigenous umbrella coalition called CONAIE, the movement was characterized by broadening its demands beyond a purely agrarian focus to include economic, territorial, political, cultural, and linguistic rights. CONAIE was formed in 1986 by several indigenous organizations from the high sierra and the equatorial regions. At this time, large agroindustrial producers prospered from Ecuador's free trade policies, but smaller—typically indigenous—farmers could not compete because of higher interest rates and rising costs of basic necessities. The movement was distinguished from peasant-based interest groups of the past by a deemphasis of class-based land claims and the promotion of cultural and territorial rights and a framing of Ecuador's indigenous populations as ethnic groups in a multiethnic society (Zamosc 2004). The frame of multiethnic diversity and conservation of traditional lands resonated with many NGOs in the global North to provide resources for pushing the movement's claims.

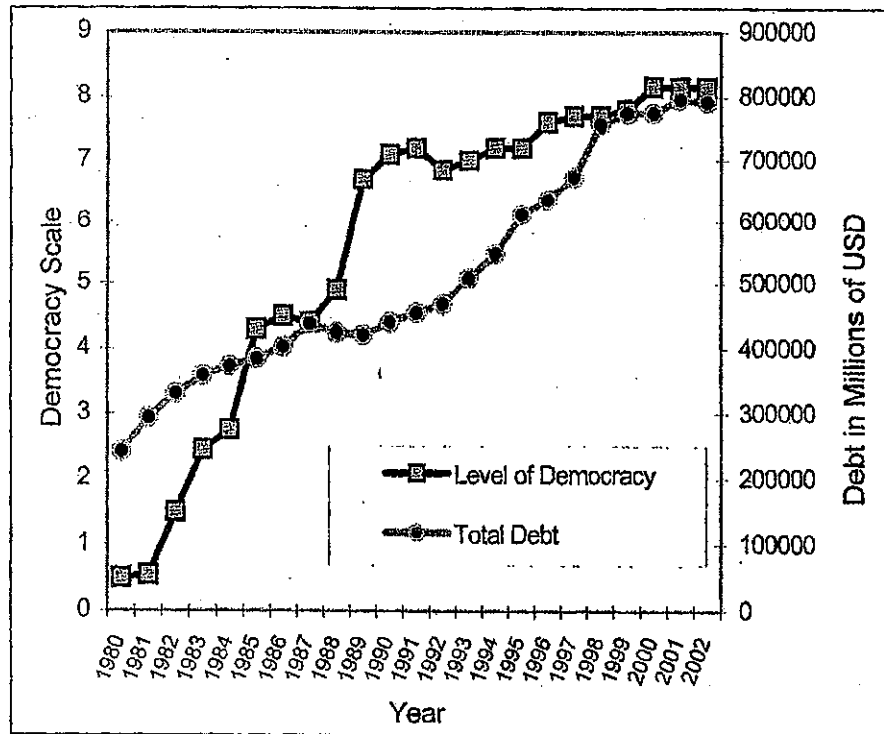
The macroeconomic conditions of Ecuador strongly paralleled those in Mexico, with the additional factor that Mexican growers faced impending competition from the U.S. under conditions of NAFTA. On January 1, 1994, the day that NAFTA went into effect, about 3,000 armed Mayan Indians from the state of Chiapas seized the capital, San Cristóbal de Casas, and several other surrounding municipalities, inaugurating the Zapatista uprising. The rebels' grievances stressed ethnic-regional inequalities in addition to political claims against Mexico's ruling party—especially regarding regional favoritism. Like CONAIE, there was a global awareness in framing of the demands. Zapatista spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos describes the global context: "Billions of tons of natural resources go through Mexican ports . . . [to] the United States, Canada, Holland, Germany, Japan . . . [but] poor people can not cut down trees [because foreign timber companies own the rights.]" (quoted in McMichael 2000: 271). Also like Ecuador, support from human rights INGOs played an active role. Several observers have stressed the importance of global linkages in the Zapatista rebellion: anti-NAFTA NGOs in Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. disseminated information about the rebellion (Schulz 1998: 594-597; also see Olesen's chapter in this volume). These ties seem to have been instrumental in mobilizing international protests against the Mexican army's counteroffensive. Solidarity demonstrations occurred in Canada, the U.S., Great Britain, France, Germany, and Spain. Likewise, Maney (2001b) stresses the role of global resources via transnational SMOs in the successful movement for land rights among Panama's San Blas Kuna Indians. He also partly attributes the less successful pursuit of land rights by Brazil's Yanomani to their weaker transnational ties.

DEMOCRATIZING POLITICS

No overview of Latin American protest would be complete without reference to the veritable wave of democratization that swept the region between 1979 and 1990. Military governments and/or personal dictatorships were replaced by elected civilian regimes in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Some of these political transitions were elite-led, but several were equally driven by popular movements from below (Foweraker and Landman 1997). In Chile, for example, shantytown dwellers, students, progressive clergy, human rights organizations, and labor unions played key roles in placing pressure on the General Augusto Pinochet regime to liberalize

(Schneider 1995). Similar types of coalitions applied weight on the Argentine and Brazilian military governments to initiate system-wide democratization in the early 1980s. In Central America, especially in the cases of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, armed insurgents and civil society allies forced out (or negotiated out) decades-old brutal dictatorships and military governments (Paige 1997; Jonas 2000; Wood 2000; Robinson 2003; Booth, Walker, and Wade 2006).

Recognizing that there were a variety of forms of popular mobilizing in pre-democratic transition Latin America, we focus here on the new terrain of relatively more open polities in the 1990s and 2000s, and the likelihood of social movement emergence and associated forms of popular mobilization. But not only did political movements for democratic rights represent a significant category of protest, the democratization of Latin American states was a structural influence that had important effects on the wave of economic protests discussed above. Figure 1.1 demonstrates that democratization and debt crisis have grown together over the past two decades in Latin America and suggests that this sets the stage for popular struggles in the 1990s and early 2000s covered in the preceding chapters. The figure brings the political and the



Sources: IMF; Marshall and Jaggars (2002). The countries included in these data are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Figure 1.1 Democracy and Foreign Debt in Latin America, 1980-2002

economic together, which we believe are critical in understanding the current wave of contention in the region. The democracy index is constructed from Marshall and Jaggars's (2002) Polity Index. A score of 10 corresponds to full democratization and a

score of -10 equals complete authoritarianism. The index was compiled by averaging the annual scores of twenty Latin American and Caribbean countries between 1980 and 2002. The figure shows that the region had a very low democratization average in the early 1980s. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, the region was high in the democracy index, with an average of around 8. Latin America's foreign debt has also clearly sustained an upward trend since the regional economic meltdown in the early 1980s.

In the early days of Latin America's democratic transitions, commentators observed a *decrease* in overall popular movement organizing (Oxhorn 1996; Chalmers, Martin, and Piester 1997).³ The demands and grievances centering on issues relating to repressive authoritarian rule were no longer as salient as regimes moved on to convoke competitive multiparty elections at the local and national levels (Linz and Stepan 1996; Eckstein 2001b; Salazar Villava 2002). The emerging institutional politics would be dominated by traditional and newly established political parties inside the polity (Canel 1992). The social movement sector in each of the emerging new (or renewed) democracies had to recalibrate its organizational and mobilizing strategies in the context of this more open political environment. Oppositional movements and civil society groups needed to adapt to the new rules of the political game (Foweraker 1995). Everyday forms of resistance such as "oppositional speech acts" (Johnston 2005), clandestine organizational structures (Johnston and Figa 1988), and absolute resistance to regimes gave way to new forms of more open organizing and alliances with ideologically similar political parties (Hellman 1992).

At the same time that surviving social movements and oppositional collectivities from the pre-transition era were readjusting their organizational forms and stratagems, increasing democratization made it possible for the growth and spread of several types of civic groups and associations. Such civil society organizations included a variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as environmental, public health, indigenous rights, women's rights, gay rights, and cultural groups—to name just a few (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998). A democratizing regime allows for more of such groups to exist and possibly obtain legal status. Many of the newly emerging NGOs maintain transnational ties to international entities through loose affiliation, financing, or serving as the local chapters of development organizations (Keck and Sikkink 1998b; Korzeniewicz and Smith 2000). From this universe of NGOs (which vary enormously in mission and political ideology), an organizational infrastructure is created that in part may be appropriated during mobilizing campaigns against unwanted neoliberal policy changes, reforms, and "modernization" programs.

Potentially even more important for the Americas, though, is the increasing density of *regional* cross-border ties (Korzeniewicz and Smith 2004). Several inter-American organizations and bodies now hold annual gatherings such as the São Paulo Forum (Robinson 1992), the various World Social Forums (*Foro Social Mundial*) hosted in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Venezuela, and the *Foro Mesoamericano* in Central America. These regional encounters provide a critical social space whereby local NGOs, social movement organizations (SMOs), political parties, and like-minded individuals exchange information, develop long-term contacts, and reaffirm social solidarity around a pan-Latin American identity with a strong flavor of anti-neoliberalism. Thomas Olesen's contribution to this volume shows parallel dynamics during the convocation of the pro-Zapatista intercontinental *encuentros*.

We would also predict that the more "classical social actors" (Calderón 1995: 20) in the labor and educational sectors (i.e., unions, students, and teachers) would be freer to organize once they adapted to the liberalizing political environment (Cordero Ulate 2004). Finally, neighborhood groups, informal sector workers (especially market and

street vendors, but also newly mobilized collectivities such as sex workers), and peasant associations and cooperatives should also have an easier time organizing with a *relatively* more publicly accountable political regime. In brief, state practices of regime liberalization and democratization provide system-wide “structural” changes in political opportunity (Meyer and Minkoff 2004) favorable to multiple subaltern and excluded social groups to launch mobilizing campaigns (Goldstone 2004). System-wide political opportunities or changes in the larger political environment associated with Latin American democratization and favorable for popular mobilization include a relaxation in state repression (McAdam 1996a), competitive elections and relatively more access to state institutions (Tarrow 1998; Almeida 2003). Indeed, as Tilly states, democratization is intimately tied to the spread of social movements:

democratization in itself promotes formation and proliferation of social movements. It does so because each of its elements—regularity, breadth, equality, consultation, and protection—contributes to social movement activity. It also does so because it encourages the establishment of other institutions (e.g., political parties and labor unions) whose presence in turn usually facilitates social movement claim making. (2004: 137-138)

Moreover, the most potent SMOs and political organizations in the region, in terms of the numbers of people mobilized in collective action, tend to have been founded in the transition period or the post-authoritarian era of their respective countries. This pattern seems to be represented by a wide array of cases such as the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the *Central de los Trabajadores Argentinos* (CTA), the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST) in Brazil, the *Bloque Popular* in Honduras, and the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB) along with a variety of newer SMOs in Bolivia (e.g., coca-grower federations, municipal associations in El Alto and Cochabamba, etc.). As a general proposition, movements founded in a democratizing political environment would likely mobilize more rapidly and extensively because their prevailing organizational structures and practices would be geared toward a liberalizing regime and imprinted at the time of the movement’s birth (Stinchcombe 1965). On the other hand, SMOs left over from the pre-democratic period would have to expend precious time and resources overcoming sunk costs by shedding outdated modes of struggle while simultaneously learning new tactics and behaviors consistent with a competitive electoral system.⁴ Nonetheless, enduring traditions and repertoires of resistance from past movements may be transmitted over time and space to contemporary movements such as the roadblocks currently used by the unemployed workers’ movement in Argentina (*los piqueteros*) that were first used in southern Santa Fe province by rural groups in the early twentieth century (Giarracca and Bidaseca 2001) or displaced unionized miners in Bolivia transferring their organizing skills to the newly-settled tropical cocoa-growing provinces in Cochabamba as a major asset in the *cocacero* movement (Vargas and Córdova 2004).

At the same time, there exists substantial variation within and between countries in the level of popular mobilization that cannot be accounted for by system-wide openings in political opportunity associated with regime democratization. Scholars must therefore explain how changes in “issue specific” political opportunities (Meyer and Minkoff 2004) affect the likelihood for mobilization for particular social sectors and groups. These would include such positive policy shifts as the establishment of new state agencies that potentially favor particular groups such as an institute of agrarian

reform or the implementation of new laws protecting and/or recognizing indigenous people's rights, languages, and autonomy as in the cases of Ecuador in the 1980s and Bolivia in the 1990s (Vargas and Córdova 2004). In the latter case, such positive state actions legitimate pre-existing collective identities (i.e., ethnic identity) that may empower specific culturally defined groups to engage in future rounds of collective action in terms of increasing the probability of gaining new benefits or advantages (Amenta and Caren 2004).

Of course, we have delineated a rosy picture of post-authoritarian Latin America. If this were the case, much of the popular mobilization witnessed would largely focus on gaining even more advantages, collective goods, and extending democracy even further. The democratic regimes that have emerged in the region are still plagued by widespread official corruption, institutional racism, legitimacy problems, and severe economic constraints (Oxhorn and Ducatenzeiler 1998; Diamond 1999; Figueroa Ibarra 2002).⁵ In short, even after the democratic transitions, there remains a major gap between democratic procedures in principle and upholding the rule of law in practice (Foweraker and Landman 1997). Indeed, the chapters by Auyero on Argentina and Holzner on Mexico in this volume demonstrate both the triggering and constraining roles of local state corruption in collective action dynamics.

It appears that the new wave of anti-austerity protests throughout the region is driven at the macro-level by several years of democratization (which peaks in the late 1990s and early 2000s) and the increasing economic threats associated with neoliberal globalization (Korzeniewicz and Smith 2000). Democratization seems to have a "lag effect" on mass contention in the region. The "cooling off" period of diminished social movement activity observed in the early years of the democratic transition in the Americas is giving way to intensified protest campaigns against unwanted economic changes. Just as structural adjustment policies reconfigured the relationship between citizens and the state in terms of social and economic distribution (Portes and Hoffman 2003), the social movement sector in each country of the region has "readjusted" to the prevailing political-economic environment from authoritarian-developmentalism to neoliberal democracy. This process was time dependent as new organizational structures, alliances and collective identities developed to effectively respond to the emerging political formation of today's neoliberal democracies.

Each of the chapters in this volume presents social movement cases that operate in this larger macro-context. The individual studies demonstrate the national and sectoral variations of these struggles, from women fighting for basic rights in garment factories and squatters for land rights, to unemployed and state workers struggling for employment and owed back wages. Even the paradigmatic movement against authoritarianism and human rights abuses in the region—*Los Madres de Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina—has integrated into its claim-making repertoire issues related to the social consequences of free market economic policies. The Plaza de Mayo itself served as ground zero for the pitched battles between unarmed protesters and police on December 20, 2001—at the height of the *Argentinazo* (see Borland's chapter 8).

THE STUDIES

We have selected most of the chapters in this volume according to the main themes of (1) popular protest against neoliberal policies, (2) occurring in the context of democratization, (3) and drawing on the support of transnational advocacy networks and TSMOs. Several other chapters have been selected because they shed light on (4) how

neoliberalism and democracy affect gender issues related to social movement participation and (5) how they shape the moral economy of protest. These patterns of protest occurrence comprise the book's five thematic sections.

The early chapters in this volume examine large-scale collective actions by civil society against economic liberalization policies. In chapter 2, Shefner, Blad, and Pasdirtz take a comparative perspective by analyzing anti-austerity protest trends in Mexico and Argentina using a data set that updates and extends Walton and Seddon's decade-old protest-event data. A key finding is that, using economic modeling techniques similar to the IMF's but with social and political factors highlighted, neoliberal economic policies have a negative effect on the standard of living in those countries, which in turn, affect the occurrence of protest.

The next two chapters present examples of the scope, focus, and tactics of two important anti-neoliberal protests. López Maya and Lander (in chapter 3) present an impressive compilation of protest event data from Venezuela—spanning from the 1950s, through the *Caracazo* uprising of 1989 against IMF-sponsored price hikes, to the contentious Chávez years of the early 2000s. Almeida then presents a detailed study (chapter 4) of how negative policy impacts on public health care led to major mobilizations in El Salvador. He demonstrates how public sector employees that organize civil society groups and align with strong oppositional political parties sustained one of the largest campaigns in Latin America to prevent privatization—the outsourcing of El Salvador's state-run hospitals and medical services.

We then present two studies that explore the effects of democratization on protest mobilization—both focusing on Mexico but with implications that extend to other states as well. In Holzner's important study of a squatter settlement community mobilization on the outskirts of Oaxaca city, Mexico (chapter 5), the strong ties of patron-client relations are shown to have endured well into the neoliberal democratizing era inhibiting autonomous collective action for particular actors, while weak ties with newer political parties open up possibilities for independent mobilization. Holzner provides a sobering warning against studies that tend to overestimate the autonomy of civil society once a democratic transition commences. In strong corporatist states such as Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil, patron-client cliques may well carry over into the democratic period in some of the most impoverished social sectors such as urban squatter communities. Wada presents an innovative technique in chapter 6 for examining the changing demands or claims by oppositional groups over four decades—spanning from the developmentalist-authoritarian era to the current period of neoliberal democracy. He shows that claim making in Mexico has increasingly become politicized in the neoliberal era as challengers mix economic and social claims with demands for political rights.

The studies by Borland (chapter 7) and Bandy and Bickham-Mendez (chapter 8) combine the three forces of neoliberal trends, democratization, and transnational influences in terms of women's mobilization. Borland shows how the movement that captured the imaginations of human rights activists and feminists across Latin America and the globe, Argentina's *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, matured both organizationally and ideologically to embrace anti-neoliberal platforms while maintaining original demands of an accounting for *los desaparecidos* of Argentina's dirty war and punishment of its perpetrators. Bandy and Bickham-Mendez's chapter focuses on how export processing zones open up new forms of mobilization led by female activists and women's advocacy groups. At the same time, they show how these movements must navigate the delicate (and understudied) within-movement contradictions of patriarchal organizations and traditional authority structures in developing strategies of coalition

formation and tactical choices. Such struggles for democratic practices within non-state organizations (including SMOs) are an often-neglected arena by analysts of social movement politics in Latin America (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998).

The next two chapters offer in-depth case studies of particular groups and countries in their popular struggles during the neoliberal transformation of the region over the past two decades. Auyero (in chapter 9) employs an ethnographic account of two major social conflicts in the mid-1990s that were the immediate precursors to the development of Argentina's nation-wide unemployed workers' movement (*los piqueteros*)—the largest such movement in the Americas. He gathered the rich interview and archival data in the critical years immediately preceding Argentina's social eruptions at the end of 2001. Drawing from the work of E.P. Thompson and James Scott, Auyero calls for a "moral politics" understanding of popular collective action. The chapter offers an innovative way of tackling a daunting task for students of collective action—bringing macro economic changes (structural adjustment and public sector privatization) to the micro level of the interpretations of the specific communities impacted by these major shifts—municipalities outside the often-studied capital megacities. Auyero teaches us that reactions to negative economic changes associated with structural adjustment policies are clearly not simply knee-jerk reactions or the work of outside agitators and alienated political elites (as commercial media accounts often suggest), but rather connected to local beliefs about proper economic and political arrangements between regional powerholders and the popular sectors, and the potentially explosive consequences when those tacitly understood arrangements are violated. For example, in Auyero's case of Santiago del Estero, the pattern of looting and vandalism clearly shows that the grievances were directed at local state institutions and state managers—those blamed for the official corruption and responsible for wage arrears of civil servants.

Wolford's contribution to this volume (chapter 10) compares two distinct regions of landless worker's movement (MST) mobilization in Brazil. She contends that MST members' spatial construction of their communities, especially prevailing norms of property rights associated with specific rural economic arrangements, plays a decisive role in the timing of poor farmers' decision to join the high-risk landless movement. Similar to Auyero's work on the moral economy of protest, she complements the important macro explanations of the MST's rise based on grievances, political opportunities, and institutional resources by demonstrating the *multiple* pathways of membership based on regional and social class variations in productive relations and their associated meanings attached to land usage.

We close with three contributions that demonstrate the role of transnational advocacy networks and the difficulties of building and sustaining them. Olesen (chapter 11) analyzes the strategies of transnational framing that brings together a global solidarity network for the Zapatista struggle in Chiapas, Mexico. Stewart (chapter 12) examines the role of transnational resources in how indigenous activists make claims against the Guatemalan government for atrocities in the 1980s. Both of these studies demonstrate how becoming part of a transnational solidarity network is a dynamic and transformational process. Movements work to create a convergence of their interests with members of a transnational network. In contrast to Keck and Sikkink's boomerang hypothesis—that transnational strategies result from closed national and local opportunities—these two chapters show that a local to transnational shift requires new elaborations of the movements' discourse, ideologies, tactics, and goals.

The final chapter focusing on transnational linkages uses case studies of labor organizing in two Mexican maquiladoras. It traces how workers successfully resisted

low wages and poor working conditions through international network building and information sharing. Key to the success in both cases was the role that nonstate actors played in domestic and international politics, operating outside of national borders to simultaneously target the local, national, and international level. This chapter by Victoria Carty draws on social movement and international relations literature to conceptualize the transnationalization of grassroots efforts to pressure multinational corporations and host governments to respect labor laws, trade agreements, and national and self-mandated corporate codes of conduct.

In summary, the following contributions offer an important sampling of the various types of social movement struggles that are carried out in Latin America under the relatively new contexts of political and economic liberalization and with the possible salience of TSMOs and transnational advocacy networks. These movements range from export-processing zone workers and austerity-based protest movements, to unemployed workers, rural movements, indigenous movements, and human rights-based movements. The lessons learned from these cases will be insightful to activists, students and scholars as Latin America appears to remain on its current trajectory of deepening neoliberal democratization and heightened levels of popular mobilization.

NOTES

1. We do not include exclusively environmental campaigns nor the several armed insurrections and civil wars that occurred throughout Latin America. We do not discuss student protests, which sometimes arise from increases in tuition, cuts in the number of classes, faculty layoffs, or reductions of university resources—in other words, educational issues. Student protest often occurs in solidarity with workers and leftist organizations. Also, protests that focus on economic issues strictly defined, such as tax increases or currency devaluations are not covered. In the next section on democratic openings, we discuss political protests, as such.

2. In 1987 the movement's SMO, *Comissão Regional de Antingidos por Barragens* (Regional Committee of those Displaced by Dams) won an agreement with the state power utility that provided for fair reimbursement in cash or resettlement of those affected, but it was the leverage of the transnational organizations plus openings in Brazilian democracy that were critical for the success.

3. Eckstein (2001b) notes, however, that labor strikes increased in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Latin America and then tapered off with increasing levels of democratization and neoliberal reforms.

4. Of course we acknowledge that there were several democratic and semi-democratic regimes in existence before the 1980s in Latin America such as Costa Rica, Colombia, and Venezuela. We focus our analysis here on general regional trends.

5. In terms of regime legitimacy, we have witnessed the fall of several democratically elected governments in the early 2000s, including Haiti (2004); Argentina (2001); Ecuador (2000 and 2005); Bolivia (2003 and 2005); and briefly Venezuela (2002), while Nicaragua seemed to be teetering on the brink of executive removal for most of 2005.