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## REVIEW ESSAYS

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### BEYOND ROMANTICISM: Social Movements and the Study of Political Change in Latin America

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- LO POPULAR EN AMERICA LATINA: ¿UNA VISION EN CRISIS?* Edited by Alberto Adrianzén and Eduardo Ballón. (Lima: DESCO, 1992. Pp. 313.)
- THE POLITICS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA: PROTEST, CHANGE, AND DEMOCRATIZATION.* By Alison Brysk. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994. Pp. 291. \$42.50 cloth.)
- MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES Y POLITICA: LA DECADA OCHENTA EN LATINO-AMERICA.* By Fernando Calderón. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1995. Pp. 132.)
- THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN CHILE.* Revised edition. Edited by Paul W. Drake and Iván Jaksić. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. Pp. 321. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- REVOLUTIONIZING MOTHERHOOD: THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO.* By Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard. (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994. Pp. 278. \$45.00 cloth, \$15.95 paper.)
- LA OTRA CARA DE LA LUNA: NUEVOS ACTORES SOCIALES EN EL PERU.* By Luis Pásara, Nena Delpino, Rocío Valdeavellano, and Alonso Zarzar. (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios de Democracia y Sociedad, 1991. Pp. 208.)
- ORGANIZING CIVIL SOCIETY: THE POPULAR SECTORS AND THE STRUGGLE*

- FOR DEMOCRACY IN CHILE.* By Philip D. Oxborn. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995. Pp. 373. \$55.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)
- COMBATIENDO EL CAPITAL: CRISIS Y RECOMPOSICION DE LA CLASE OBRERA ARGENTINA (1985-1993).* By Pablo Pozzi and Alejandro Schneider. (Buenos Aires: El Bloque Editorial, 1994. Pp. 221.)
- CLASS, DEMOCRACY, AND LABOR IN CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINA.* By Peter Ranis. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1995. Pp. 313. \$21.95 paper.)
- SHANTYTOWN PROTEST IN PINOCHET'S CHILE.* By Cathy Lisa Schneider. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1995. Pp. 269. \$49.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)
- CULTURES IN CONFLICT: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE STATE IN PERU.* By Susan C. Stokes. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995. Pp. 183. \$45.00 cloth, \$17.00 paper.)
- NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE SOUTH: EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE.* Edited by Ponna Wignaraja. (London: Zed, 1993. Pp. 275. \$60.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.)

The boom in the study of Latin American social movements in the 1970s and 1980s manifested a high degree of faith in the transformative potential of popular organizations. During periods of authoritarian rule, social movements were heralded not only as expressions of collective resistance but as seedlings of a more democratic political culture and a more participatory civil society. In the context of a deepening crisis in state-led models of capitalist development, social movements provided collective responses to survival challenges and raised hopes for alternative forms of grassroots economic organization founded on egalitarian and solidaristic norms. For a generation of left-wing academics and political activists disillusioned by the repression of vanguard parties, the defeat of guerrilla movements, and the political weakness and vicissitudes of organized labor, new social movements were a godsend: a new form of popular subjectivity that aimed at a radically egalitarian and participatory sociopolitical order and thus restored faith in the progressive march of history.<sup>1</sup>

The course of events in the ensuing years has not been kind to this romanticized vision of the transformative potential of collective grassroots actors. Scholarship on the topic has increasingly adopted a more sober tone that reflects the progressive consolidation of technocratic democracies and a new mode of accumulation predicated on market-oriented individualism. The best of the recent literature is not content merely

1. Some of the best examples of the early celebratory literature include *América Latina 80: Democracia y movimiento popular* (Lima: DESCO, 1981); and *New Social Movements and the State in Latin America*, edited by David Slater (Amsterdam: Center for Latin American Research and Documentation, 1985). For an excellent recent collection that is generally more cautiously optimistic, see *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy and Democracy*, edited by Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992).

to celebrate the emergence of grassroots organizations or the opening of space for autonomous cultural or political expression but is making a serious effort to understand how social movements engage the formal arenas of institutional politics and try to influence public policy. This approach avoids the temptation of viewing each new manifestation of popular organization as a harbinger of change in power relationships and is also sensitive to the structural and institutional constraints on popular empowerment. The new literature has thus provided important insights into many of the most significant challenges confronting social movements in contemporary Latin America. They include the tendency for popular mobilization to wane following transitions to democratic rule, the difficulty of constructing horizontal linkages between grassroots organizations to enhance their political leverage, and the strained relationships frequently existing between popular organizations and the formal representative institutions of democratic regimes.

Considerable diversity can nevertheless be found in the new literature on social movements. The twelve works to be reviewed in this essay often set forth strikingly different interpretations of the same phenomena. This divergence of opinion is attributable in part to the different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches adopted by scholars in the field. Alternative perspectives draw attention to different dimensions of social movements and the contexts in which they operate, thus helping to identify factors that shape and constrain their political impact. Whereas some analyses stress the importance of popular political cultures and identities, others emphasize the ways in which the dynamics of social movements are influenced by structural changes in the socio-economic order or political institutions and processes. This essay will try to assess the contributions and limitations of the various approaches while synthesizing what they have to offer for general understanding of social and political change in Latin America.

*Social Movements and the Political Process:  
The Dynamics of Regime Transition*

Although social movements typically greet democratic transitions with heightened expectations, they often underestimate the challenges posed by a new political environment and the forms of adaptation that may be necessary. Democratization may provide social actors with new channels of access to public institutions, but it can also remove authoritarian rulers against which opposition forces unified and mobilized, inject divisive forms of partisan competition into social organizations, and resurrect political parties and electoral activities that can siphon off energy from social networks. Moreover, the tactics of symbolic protest adopted by social movements in challenging authoritarian regimes may not be

viable or effective in a democratic context. Much of the recent literature has therefore explored the impact of regime change on social movements or analyzed their roles in democratic transitions.

In a recent review in this journal, Paul Lawrence Haber urged greater attention to the political processes in which social movements are embedded and the institutional impact of their activities.<sup>2</sup> Several of the works reviewed here have made major contributions toward understanding such political processes. One is Cathy Lisa Schneider's *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet's Chile*, which explicitly adopts a political-process perspective in analyzing the emergence and decline of the protest movement against military rule in Chilean *poblaciones* (shantytowns). Borrowing from the approaches to the study of social movements that emphasize political-opportunity structures and resource mobilization, Schneider uses oral histories to direct attention to the linkages established between formal political institutions and informal solidary networks in the *poblaciones*. During a severe economic crisis in 1982–1983 that divided supporters of the Pinochet dictatorship and swelled the ranks of the opposition, political parties, labor unions, and nongovernmental organizations all provided vital logistical support and organizational resources for mobilizing grassroots social networks (p. 15). But protest activity did not occur evenly across Santiago's sprawling urban popular districts. Rather, it "erupted most forcefully in the traditional Communist shantytowns," where there existed "the political heritage of decades of work in the popular culture and in the formation of a skilled generation of grassroots militants" (p. 9).

Schneider argues that the Partido Comunista de Chile spawned a culture of resistance by emphasizing a structural interpretation of social problems and collective responses to community needs. Communist party influence on the protest movement undoubtedly surpassed that of leftist competitors, although it is questionable whether this outcome should be attributed primarily to the party's patterns of cultural influence and socialization rather than to its greater organizational coherence and capacity for clandestine operation. A more theoretically significant issue arises on comparing Schneider's account of links between parties and social movements with that of Philip Oxhorn in *Organizing Civil Society: The Popular Sectors and the Struggle for Democracy in Chile*. Whereas Schneider envisions social protest as springing from a party-mediated cultural and political milieu, Oxhorn argues that new types of shantytown organizations emerged only when the demise of Chile's traditionally dominant parties created political space for the expression of new collective identities and more autonomous forms of organization. According to Oxhorn, authoritarian repression of parties and functional groups like

2. See Paul Lawrence Haber, "Identity and Political Process: Recent Trends in the Study of Latin American Social Movements," *LARR* 31, no. 1 (1996):171–88.

labor unions can encourage a proliferation of territorially based grassroots organizations, especially when repression is combined with economic dislocations that provide incentives for collective self-help activities. Oxhorn acknowledges the importance of previous experience with parties or other forms of democratic organization, but he emphasizes the institutional resources and networks of the Catholic Church rather than those of political parties in the gestation of new organizations among *pobladores*. Drawing on extensive interviews with grassroots social activists, Oxhorn argues that the relationship between parties and popular organizations is essentially competitive rather than complementary (p. 31). Both are territorial in nature, and they have incongruent logics, with popular organizations manifesting a “process orientation” that stresses community, solidarity, and direct participation, whereas parties are oriented toward the aggregative representation of broader interests and the pursuit of instrumental political goals.

The discrepancy between these two authors’ interpretations is at least partially attributable to their focus on different dimensions of popular mobilization. Schneider analyzes protest activity as a form of collective resistance, whereas Oxhorn is more concerned with diverse forms of grassroots organization that often predated or outlasted the 1983–1986 protest movement: soup kitchens, neighborhood councils, handicraft workshops, consumer co-ops, communal human rights groups, and similar groups. Both recognize that these two dimensions are not synonymous, although they are probably related. The discrepancies also reflect the different theoretical perspectives that guide their respective works. Schneider’s focus on resource mobilization and political opportunities during the protest movement leads naturally to an emphasis on the Communist party, the only actor with both the strategic commitment and the organizational capacity to sponsor insurrectionary forms of resistance.<sup>3</sup> Oxhorn’s work, in contrast, is more influenced by identity approaches that direct attention to autonomous forms of popular organization. However integral the Communist Party may have been to the protest movement, it was far less central to the grassroots organizations studied by Oxhorn. As both authors recognize, the party alienated such groups with its hegemonic pretensions.

Taken together, these two works raise a series of fundamental questions about urban popular movements in the broader political process. To what extent are urban popular movements capable of self-generation, and how dependent are they on the political guidance or resources of external actors such as parties, religious institutions, nongovernmental

3. These issues are analyzed in Kenneth M. Roberts, “From the Barricades to the Ballot Box: Redemocratization and Political Realignment in the Chilean Left,” *Politics and Society* 23, no. 4 (Dec. 1995):495–519.

organizations, and the state? Can they obtain assistance from such external actors without sacrificing their political autonomy? Can base-level community organizations influence national-level institutions and public policies without establishing broader linkages, or is autonomy a recipe for localism and political marginalization? Although Oxhorn makes a strong case for autonomy, he is quick to differentiate it from localism. He claims that Chilean urban popular organizations fell short of constituting a social movement because they did not establish broader horizontal linkages among pobladores. Atomization of popular-sector organizational activity was encouraged by authoritarian repression, but it also reflected “the very nature of popular collective identity itself,” whose values and ideals “were integrally related to the community bonds associated with the concept of *vecino* and the territorially circumscribed nature of popular organizations” (p. 202). Oxhorn’s *Organizing Civil Society* is notable for its insight into a fundamental paradox of grassroots organizations: the small size and communal basis that make possible their most appealing features—their participatory style, egalitarian character, nonbureaucratic structure, and solidaristic norms—may also become self-limiting factors in the political articulation of poblador interests.

Ultimately, however, Oxhorn sees political parties as major culprits in the failure to create the horizontal networks required to transform isolated community-based popular organizations into a national poblador movement. When parties reemerged on the political scene in the 1980s, they first tried to “capture” urban popular organizations and then sought to demobilize them and channel grassroots energies into less confrontational electoral outlets to ameliorate conservative opposition to a democratic transition. At this point, the analyses of Oxhorn and Schneider converge, both viewing the regime transition in Chile as creating a new political context that discouraged nonelectoral forms of social mobilization and favored traditional partisan representation. Both works are valuable for understanding how the ebb and flow of social mobilization are influenced by broader regime dynamics and political institutions. Oxhorn’s emphasis on the competitive relationship between parties and popular organizations is clearly shaped by Chilean parties’ historic domination of civil society. He acknowledges that strong parties are not incompatible with a democratic civil society when the parties themselves are internally democratic and respect the autonomy of social organizations. But his provocative analysis leaves several questions unanswered. Are there conditions under which parties could help build horizontal linkages between base-level groups without hopelessly skewing the latter’s organizational autonomy? And if grassroots organizations forego partisan ties in the name of autonomy, by what means and channels can they most effectively exert leverage within formal democratic institutions? The formation of the Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores suggests that social

actors may need some type of partisan mediation to gain access to and leverage within democratic arenas. Similarly, Oxhorn portrays the new collective identity of *lo popular* in ideal typical terms while acknowledging that empirical realities do not always conform to the model (p. 108). Several of the other works reviewed here demonstrate that many popular organizations fall considerably short of the model of participatory, non-hierarchical, and noninstrumental collective actors.

The revised volume edited by Paul Drake and Iván Jaksic, *The Struggle for Democracy in Chile*, does not focus primarily on social movements, but the contributions it contains shed new light on many of the issues raised by Oxhorn and Schneider. Manuel Antonio Garretón's essay emphasizes the rupturing of traditional linkages between parties and social actors and the subsequent recomposition of the party system. Guillermo Campero provides a revealing analysis of the ideological offensive by Chilean capitalists within civil society as they promoted a cultural revolution to consolidate Pinochet's economic legacy. Alan Angell provides a sobering portrayal of the structural, political, and organizational changes that weakened the Chilean labor movement under Pinochet. Union membership dropped by two-thirds, and union organizations became less representative and internally democratic: a cleavage developed between the union federation's national political orientation and the firm-level economic concerns of rank-and-file workers; unions were unable to develop linkages to poblador organizations; and they faltered in articulating the diverse interests of an unstable and structurally heterogeneous workforce. Angell's contribution shows how economic retaliation forced unions to take a back seat to political parties in the protest movement against Pinochet (p. 195) and how the national unification of the labor movement in 1988 depended on the major parties' reaching a political accord.

The most important contribution to *The Struggle for Democracy in Chile* for the study of social movements is María Elena Valenzuela's insightful essay, "The Evolving Roles of Women under Military Rule." Valenzuela demonstrates how authoritarianism can lead to politicization of the private sphere and how economic policies that undermine large-scale secondary associations can nevertheless spawn new forms of community-based collective action. Although many women organized according to traditional gender roles as mothers or homemakers to fight the dictatorship or meet basic economic needs, Valenzuela argues that feminist identities gradually emerged, even among poor women (p. 171). Like Oxhorn, she perceives a basic tension between political parties and social movements: parties have tried to capture women's organizations and have only partially incorporated gender issues into their platforms, while women's groups that remain independent "are largely isolated from the political system" (p. 183). Consequently, although women began to develop new

roles under the dictatorship, "Once the traditional political organizations re-emerged . . . , women's activity lost its relative importance in the face of those organizations' tendency to reconstitute preexisting structures of discrimination" (p. 162).

This pattern of social mobilization and regime transition followed by partial reform and marginalization also emerges in Alison Brysk's nuanced and richly detailed study, *The Politics of Human Rights in Argentina: Protest, Change, and Democratization*. Brysk challenges structural and economic explanations of social movements by stressing the normative use of symbolic protest to generate power for the powerless. Her attention to expressive protest, the changing character of relations between the state and civil society, and collective norms, identities, and symbols places her work within the literature on new social movements. Yet her study is distinctive in focusing on the impact of social movements on state institutions as well as on their influence on civil society and the public discourse. Brysk argues that the human rights movement helped delegitimize Argentina's military regime, promote a democratic transition, and modify the political agenda through its impact on collective norms and political consciousness. What truly sets *The Politics of Human Rights in Argentina* apart, however, is its compelling analysis of the impact of the movement on political behavior and public institutions under the new democratic regime.

Brysk pays systematic attention to the efforts of human rights reformers to influence political parties, military and police forces, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, and educational and religious institutions. Her discovery that the social movement had more impact on civil society than on state institutions is familiar, but she attributes the limited scope and institutionalization of reforms not to the movement's displacement by political parties but to "the inherent limitations of a symbolic, expressive new social movement. . . . The new social movement was more effective in settings of transition or crisis than during the daily operation of long-standing institutions" (p. 108). In a democratic context, the moralistic and absolutist stands of human rights organizations made it difficult to bargain or build alliances, leaving them on the margins of the formal political arena. Brysk observes, "The movement's attempt to maintain its moral authority through highly symbolic demands led to a public image of intransigence, and political styles that were uniquely effective under dictatorship became a movement handicap under democracy" (p. 125). These problems with functional adaptation left human rights discourse as "the property of a marginalized subculture and a diffuse collective consciousness" (p. 141).

Marguerite Guzmán Bouvard is far less restrained in *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. With great passion and affection, Bouvard recounts the moving personal stories of the women



who became an international symbol of human rights. Her book provides poignant testimony as to how personal tragedy can lead to the transformation of individual consciousness and encourage politicization. Bouvard sees the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo as a revolutionary force not in the traditional sense of conquering state power but in their use of collective protest to transform individual lives, redefine maternity, and alter the public conscience by speaking truth to ruling powers. Bouvard concedes that the Madres have subsequently been left on the sidelines by Argentina's new democratic regime, but she argues that they have not sought power within state institutions. Instead, they have redefined power by their mere presence in the public arena, by claiming space in order to articulate political opposition and pose an alternative moral authority.

In contrast to Brysk and feminist critics who argue that the Madres never questioned the sexual division of labor,<sup>4</sup> Bouvard claims that they eroded the distinctions between public and private spheres and redefined maternity in collective and political terms through their claims on the state. Bouvard also departs from Brysk's view of the Madres' organization as personalistic and hierarchical (p. 160) by praising the movement's internal democratic features, including its lack of formal bureaucratic structures, its participatory style, and its manner of operation by consensus (p. 229). Yet however moving Bouvard's account may be, it identifies so uncritically with the Madres as to cast doubt on some of her more far-reaching claims regarding their political impact. State institutions may not be the sole repository of power, but they surely are a significant one. Consequently, a conception of power as the creation of space for dissent within civil society may be reassuring for those who insist on the relevance of social movements, but it will not satisfy others who seek change through formal structures and political processes.

### *Popular Cultures and Social Movements*

In *Cultures in Conflict: Social Movements and the State in Peru*, Susan Stokes also demonstrates how social movements are shaped by state initiatives and the political context in which they operate. Ultimately, however, she mounts a ringing defense of the importance of popular political culture in the development of urban lower-class movements. The central question inspiring Stokes's work is, why are some sectors of the urban poor drawn to radical and confrontational forms of collective action while others reject collective action or rely on traditional cooperative and clientelistic relationships with political authorities? On the basis of interviews

4. For a perceptive analysis of the issues, see María del Carmen Feijóo, with Marcela Mari Alejandra Nari, "Women and Democracy in Argentina," in *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Participation and Democracy*, 2d ed., edited by Jane S. Jaquette (Boulder: Westview, 1994), 109–29.

with community activists in 1985–1986 and a sample survey of voters from the lower-class district of Independencia in Lima, Stokes finds compelling qualitative and quantitative evidence of a complex bifurcated political culture among the urban poor. Whereas a significant minority of the poor believe that confrontational tactics are the most effective form of leverage against state power, the majority consent to domination and prefer to cultivate personal relationships with those in power. Drawing on the theories of Antonio Gramsci, Stokes labels such consent as “hegemony” (p. 7) and argues that this intellectual and ideological subordination represents a major impediment to radical forms of mobilization. Collective resistance is therefore less a matter of organization than a question of developing a new ethic or a new political consciousness that promulgates a new conception of rights and an alternative set of values (p. 116).

*Cultures in Conflict* makes a valuable theoretical contribution by injecting human agency and belief systems into the debate over radical forms of social mobilization. Stokes’s work challenges both structuralist and rational-choice theories that deny the significance of cultural differences. It also provides an instructive counterpoint to James Scott’s argument that the deference of the poor is merely feigned to ensure survival.<sup>5</sup> The first chapter includes a particularly useful analysis of the ways in which hegemony can be distinguished from calculated deference. The historical and empirical chapters then shed considerable light on the role played by certain types of institutional contacts—with a corporatist state under the reformist regime of General Juan Velasco Alvarado, the progressive Catholic Church, militant unions or political parties, and higher education—in the gestation of a counterhegemonic political consciousness among the urban poor. Some readers may question whether these diffusion effects downplay the role of more autonomous organizational or experiential factors among the urban poor. But ultimately the crisis and demise of these institutional influences over the past decade may help to explain the parallel weakening of radical forms of collective action in urban lower-class districts. Although Stokes’s *Cultures in Conflict* does not explore such possibilities in depth, it remains a landmark study of the conditions that facilitate or inhibit radical forms of mobilization.

Popular political culture is also a central theme in the updated version of Peter Ranis’s *Class, Democracy, and Labor in Contemporary Argentina*. Ranis explores working-class political beliefs and values through a survey conducted in 1985–1986 of 110 organized blue- and white-collar workers from four industrial unions and three service unions in Greater Buenos Aires. On the basis of this survey, Ranis challenges conventional images of Argentina’s labor movement by arguing that it is not authori-

5. James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

tarian, prone to class conflict, and inherently wedded to an interventionist and protectionist state. He finds instead that most workers are democratic in their political orientation and generally receptive to the type of market reforms implemented by Peronist President Carlos Menem, such as the privatization of public enterprises and social services, despite these policies' reversal of traditional Peronist principles.

*Class, Democracy, and Labor in Contemporary Argentina* is notable for its conceptualization of class and its analysis of class identities. Ranis argues that class identity cannot be derived automatically from objective material conditions and that the actual political identities of workers are fluid and complex, reflecting their multiple roles as consumers, homeowners, and citizens as well as producers. Ranis then claims the existence of an entrepreneurial dimension to working-class political culture that values economic autonomy, individual mobility, and property ownership. In contrast to Stokes's assessment of clientelism among the urban poor, Ranis does not perceive working-class entrepreneurialism as a manifestation of an imposed ideological hegemony that serves the interests of domination. In his view, "social freedom and autonomy, competitiveness, consumerism, and love of leisure are not necessarily evidence of bourgeois cultural penetration but rather of universal desires" (p. 193). By appealing to such universal desires, Menem has been able to implement a neoliberal project over the opposition of groups representing more narrow and particularistic interests.

Ranis's study thus helps the reader understand how Menem was able to build a broad multiclass political base for market reforms. It also explains why labor resistance to such reforms was relatively weak and fragmented during Menem's first term in office. But *Class, Democracy, and Labor* does not explain as well as it might have the social origins and sectoral bases of resistance where it has existed. Ranis's survey is used to identify median and aggregate tendencies within the blue- and white-collar sectors, but it does not fully explore the possibility that competing political subcultures might exist within the Argentine workforce, as Stokes's work does with the urban poor in Lima. Likewise, the work does not analyze in depth the selective political and economic measures used by Menem to induce support from favored sectors of organized labor while marginalizing others. At times, this work blurs important political distinctions between social democracy and traditional Peronist populism (see p. 224), and it tends to gloss over the contradictions within the neoliberal model that could generate new forms of worker opposition. Nevertheless, Ranis's study succeeds in voicing the political attitudes of ordinary workers and poses a provocative challenge to many traditional conceptions about class and class consciousness in Argentine society.

Whereas Ranis explores the relationship between class and political identity at the micro level of the individual worker, Pablo Pozzi and

Alejandro Schneider analyze the material foundations for class-based collective action in *Combatiendo el capital: Crisis y recomposición de la clase obrera argentina (1985–1993)*. Their structural approach yields a markedly different account of labor's response to neoliberal restructuring than Ranis's culturalist explanation. Indeed, the two works are difficult to reconcile. Although Ranis's survey did not test for attitudinal distinctions between labor leaders and rank-and-file unionists, he found ordinary workers to be broadly sympathetic to market reforms. Ranis asserts that resistance is centered within a "sclerotic, inflexible labor leadership that has not mastered the new economic intricacies and challenges presented by the Menem epoch" (p. xx). Pozzi and Schneider argue the exact opposite: that resistance to the neoliberal project is concentrated among rank-and-file members of the labor movement, whereas union leaders, given their dependence on the state, are easily co-opted into schemes that make unions partners and beneficiaries of the privatization schemes (pp. 136–37).

Pozzi and Schneider's *Combatiendo el capital* testifies to the tenacity with which some circles have held fast to the Marxist conception of the working class as the central protagonist in the struggle for socialist emancipation. In their overview of the Argentine labor movement in the 1980s and 1990s, the authors concede that economic restructuring has created a more heterogeneous and segmented workforce, but they reject the post-Marxist contention that modern capitalism has eliminated the class basis for a socialist project. Pozzi and Schneider argue instead that labor still serves as a pole of antagonism to capital and that occupational segmentation should not be equated with social fragmentation because homogenization occurs at the level of worker incomes and qualifications (p. 207). Thus despite the infusion of individualistic norms within the working class in the neoliberal era, material conditions exist for class solidarity and collective resistance to capitalist relations of production, even though the authors are forced to soften their emphasis on class in order to incorporate territorially based social networks in urban lower-class districts into their vision of change. Ultimately, however, the recomposition of working-class culture and social organization that Pozzi and Schneider proclaim appears more as a hope than as a reality in their work. The empirical examples of collective resistance that they provide remain too isolated, localized, and fragmented to seriously challenge Argentina's capitalist restructuring, and one finds scant evidence of horizontal linkages between the pockets of labor and urban lower-class resistance. Pozzi and Schneider's argument for a recomposition of a broader working-class project rests on their faith in the historical dialectic rather than on a projection from empirical trends.

In failing to identify all the structural and organizational constraints faced by social actors in the neoliberal era, Pozzi and Schneider are far from alone. In general, the literature on social movements has paid

more attention to issues of regime change and democratization than to the challenges posed by economic restructuring. This situation may be changing, however, as a number of scholars—especially from Latin America itself—are exploring the dynamics of social movements in the context of economic crisis and market restructuring. As will be shown, such work has inserted new issues into debates over the transformative potential of social movements and has often projected a more pessimistic tone.

*Toward a Theory of Social Movements in the Neoliberal Era?*

The common theme that unites the final four works to be reviewed here (those of Wignaraja, Calderón, Adrianzén and Ballón, and Pásara, Delpino, Valdeavellano, and Zarzar) is the challenge of constructing a popular political alternative in a context where economic crisis has destabilized and diversified the social landscape, ruptured traditional social and political networks, and fragmented collective action among popular sectors. The most optimistic account is the edited volume by Ponna Wignaraja entitled *New Social Movements in the South: Empowering the People*. A product of the United Nations University's Third World Development Project, this collaborative effort brings together essays by fourteen scholars from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. The individual contributions vary widely in content and quality. For example, Daniel Camacho offers a celebratory but unconvincing portrayal of how diverse popular movements in Latin America will unify and accumulate forces in a joint struggle against the logic of capital, while Harsh Sethi provides a perceptive analysis of the organizational dilemmas that arise when building linkages beyond the local level. Sethi argues that overcoming localism requires some tolerance of formal organization and political hierarchy, contending that parties and social movements are not inherently antagonistic in that they perform different functions even when social movements emerge in response to party failings. The central theoretical essay by editor Wignaraja claims that the traditional Western paradigms spawned by Marxism and neoclassical thought have been eclipsed, creating the need for a new paradigm centered on participatory democracy and human development. Although he believes that new social movements can constitute a "countervailing power" in civil society to both state and market structures of domination, he does not convincingly demonstrate how micro-level praxis can be linked to macro-level social transformation.

The two collaborative works edited or written by Peruvian scholars are far more pessimistic, as their titles imply, perhaps reflecting the political demise of Peru's once-powerful popular movements over the past decade. The volume edited by Alberto Adrianzén and Eduardo Ballón entitled *Lo popular en América Latina: ¿Una visión en crisis?* brings together contributions by leading scholars across Latin America. They

debate the decline of “national popular movements,” the weakening of class-based secondary associations, the proliferation of localized forms of collective action oriented toward survival or productive ventures, and the populist tendencies of an atomized mass society. Ballón’s contribution provides an incisive analysis of how Peru’s economic crisis undermined aggregative tendencies among social actors and forced them to turn inward in order to focus on immediate survival needs. He also argues that the failure of the state to respond to the economic crisis facilitated the spread of anti-statist and neoliberal sentiments that were devastating to the Peruvian Left. The various contributors to *Lo popular en América Latina* concur that the new partial forms of collective action in civil society do not in themselves challenge macro-level power structures. Andrés Pascal Allende manages to find hope for the construction of a broader popular subject in the political sphere, but Sinesio López and José Aricó emphasize the schism between the social and political spheres and the impediments to overcoming fragmentation through political aggregation.

While the contributors to *Lo popular en América Latina* are sympathetic yet skeptical observers of new social movements, Luis Pásara and his coauthors launch a frontal assault on romanticized images of new social movements in *La otra cara de la luna: Nuevos actores sociales en el Perú*. Pásara, Nena Delpino, Rocío Valdeavellano, and Alonso Zarzar provide case studies of women’s organizations, micro-enterprises, peasant patrols (*rondas campesinas*), and nongovernmental organizations, concluding that these groups are anything but the seeds of an alternative sociopolitical order that is radically democratic and egalitarian. The authors’ critique proceeds along two main lines. First, they reject the common argument that new social movements tend to be internally democratic in their organizational structures. Instead, Pásara et al. find that popular organizations typically reproduce the hierarchical, authoritarian, and clientelistic organizational and leadership patterns prevailing in the society around them. Researchers who claim the opposite, they argue, commit the methodological error of mistaking the discourse of popular organizations for their practice. Second, the authors of *La otra cara de la luna* view new social movements as forms of “segmented collective action” that are localized in their impact and marginalized from the political arena. They are neither agents of broader social change nor progenitors of a new order but defensive forms of mutualism and *asistencialismo* that allow survival amid the decomposition of the old order. Any impetus for centralized organization comes from external agents and is limited to the leadership level.

Pásara and his colleagues have performed an important service by providing a provocative antidote to the romanticism that has all too often pervaded the literature on social movements. Their work should be scrutinized carefully by every scholar who believes that popular collective subjects act as a force for progressive change in the region. At the same time, their

joint critique goes too far in denying popular organizations any capacity to combine forces for social or political transformation. Their analysis is not only sobering but disempowering in leaving little room for popular subjectivity in the reconstituting of the social fabric during the neoliberal era.

In comparison, Fernando Calderón's *Movimientos sociales y política: La década ochenta en Latinoamérica* provides grounds for cautious optimism. His work may be the closest thing available to a general theory of social movements in the neoliberal era. Calderón analyzes Latin American social movements in the context of global economic and technological change, acknowledging that these forces have created a more fragmented and heterogeneous social structure that engenders particularistic, decentralized, and disconnected forms of collective action. His study offers a sweeping overview of many different types of social movements but argues that all of them are too partial to pose a hegemonic challenge or to contest the systemic logic of transnational political and economic power. Thus a basic contradiction exists between the global concentration of power and wealth and the diverse but decentralized forms of resistance characterizing the new order.

Calderón nevertheless tries to find realistic grounds for hope in some of the commonalities that exist among many social movements: their orientation toward democratic participation in diverse social and political arenas, their consistent demand for organizational autonomy, and their critical perspective toward technocratic modernization. He argues that micro-level collective action can address immediate problems and also aid in reconstructing social life and thus lay the foundation for recreation of the political system. Although Calderón's global perspective on the transition from one collective-action framework to another sets *Movimientos sociales y política* apart, his faith in the reconstitution of historical subjects builds bridges to most of the other works reviewed here.

Taken together, these twelve works represent a significant improvement over the earlier generation of literature on social movements. They succeed in advancing our understanding of the dynamic properties of social movements: how they surge and decline according to changes in their external environment; how they respond to changing circumstances; how they relate to other actors; and how they influence more formal arenas of political power. If the new literature is more sober in tone, it is also more balanced and realistic in assessing the challenges confronting new social movements. Although progress has been made in explaining the dynamics of social movements in the neoliberal era, much remains to be done. The contradictions of the new order that can generate novel forms of collective action are still poorly understood, as are the linkage mechanisms available to connect multiple loci of popular resistance. The works reviewed here provide a solid conceptual and theoretical foundation for scholars who undertake to explore such questions in the future.