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New Social Movements, Structural Change, and the Urban Poor: Lessons from Mexico and Brazil

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New Social Movements, Structural Change, and the Urban Poor: Lessons from Mexico and Brazil

Abstract

This thesis examines the viability of New Social Movements in Latin America to effectively address the structural issues of urban poverty within the contexts of Mexico and Brazil. It begins by exploring the theoretical issues surrounding New Social Movements; the distinctions between protest, political integration, and poverty alleviation from a variety of perspectives; and the impact of liberation theology throughout the region. A number of New Social Movements are analyzed, primarily through a Mexican case study, and discussed within the context of World Systems Theory. The conclusions suggest that unless New Social Movements in the region consider urban poverty as a derivative of the structural oppression of peripheral societies within the global system, they will be unable to properly articulate their demands for a more just and equitable society.

Corwin J. Anderson

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This work is dedicated to~

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1. Introduction and the Scope of Inquiry

1.1 Posing the Problem

There has been much debate during the past twenty years about New Social Movements and how they affect the lives of their participants and the world around them. This is especially the case in Latin America where the structure of government is generally rigid and the propensity towards protest has a long and varied history. Traditionally, research has centred around peasant movements, the agrarian component of the region, and the relationship between the rural and urban constituencies. But as the region becomes increasingly urbanized it is necessary to examine the extent to which New Social Movements are a viable option for the millions of urban poor.

Therefore, the primary foci of this inquiry are New Social Movements in Latin America and the prospects for the urban poor to improve their lives through such measures. If, in fact, the urban poor have very little influence over public affairs, are New Social Movements and civil unrest the optimum means through which to achieve political integration? In addition, what constitutes a New Social Movement and when does civil unrest and urban protest become transformed into an identifiable movement? The diversity of Latin America lends itself to a number of movements that may exhibit a variety of characteristics but there are also many similarities that characterize the region in general and New Social Movement theory more specifically. Citing examples from both Mexico and Brazil, the prospects for the urban poor to fundamentally alter the structural conditions of their oppression, and their lives, through New Social Movements will be analyzed. In accordance, my Thesis Question is as follows:

> **Is it possible for New Social Movements in Latin America to fundamentally alter the structural conditions of urban poverty in the region?**

1.2 Context: Latin American Urbanization

Latin America is one of the most highly urbanized regions of the globe and the majority of this urbanization has occurred within the last fifty years. At the turn of the last century, very few Latin Americans lived within cities and by 1930 the total urban population had not yet exceeded twenty million. Even by 1950, there were only six cities; Buenos Aires, Lima, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, and Sao Paulo with more than one-million inhabitants. In contrast, that number had risen to thirty-nine by 1994 with the possibility of as many as ten more cities reaching one-million inhabitants by the year 2000. Mexico City alone accounts for as many urban inhabitants today as the entire region did in 1930. Currently, there are more than 300 million Latin Americans living within highly urbanized and industrialized centres throughout the region and their numbers are consistently increasing (Gilbert, 1994).

While there are a number of theories which debate the process of urbanization in Latin America, most agree that the region was transformed from a primarily rural to an urban based society during the twentieth century through a combination of four important factors; decreasing rates of mortality, rapid internal migration, increasing economic production, and changing technologies. The extent to which each had an individual effect is debatable, but it is difficult to argue against the fact that each played a pivotal role in the changing dynamic. The majority of infectious diseases, which had such dire consequences for many Latin American nations, were eradicated or came under some measure of control during the past century. As a result, life expectancy almost doubled from an average of thirty-four years in 1930 to almost sixty-five years by the early eighties. In conjunction with a decreasing death rate, fertility rates remained consistently high throughout most of the century. Not until the late seventies

did fertility rates significantly drop throughout the region. In the meantime, the population increased dramatically (Gilbert, 1994).

In addition, there is a clear link between the rate of urban growth and a coinciding national population growth. In certain cases, such as Argentina, immigration played a significant role and, as more people relocated from Europe beginning at the turn of the last century, Argentina became increasingly urbanized. Similar trends occurred in Uruguay and Southern Brazil. But, for the most part, rapid urbanization only occurred once mortality rates began to decline during the forties and fifties while fertility rates continued to remain high. Rural populations increased accordingly and more people began to move to the cities.

The fact that many of these cities could absorb such a large number of new inhabitants was primarily due to the impressive economic growth most were experiencing at the time. For an example, Mexico City's industrial employment grew from 271,000 in 1950 to over 700,000 in 1970 (Gilbert, 1994). An incredible increase for just twenty years but not out of the ordinary for a region characterized by urban industrial expansion during the height of popularity for the theories of growth and modernization. Correspondingly, the number of public sector jobs grew as well and residual employment resulting from the process of urbanization itself such as school teachers, construction workers, and the like rapidly increased over the decades as most cities grew steadily.

Coinciding with the expansion of employment opportunities were innovations in technology that transformed the urban landscape of Latin America. The introduction of bricks, cement, and concrete created new dwellings that housed more people than ever previously imagined. Similar innovations in transportation led to the development of

suburbia and eased the burden of commuting for those already within the city centre. It quickly got to the point where if conditions were squalid, they were no worse than in the countryside and the prospects for improvement were more promising in the city based upon previous economic expansion and the perception of better and increased opportunities.

So cities in Latin America grew and urbanization became synonymous with industrialization. What is important to bear in mind is that according to some scholars, Morse (1998) and Germani (1981) in particular, there were vast differences between the typical Latin American city and those of Western Europe and North America. Morse suggests there were two principle stages during the urban history of Latin America that accentuates its development. He determined that "whereas the Western European city represented a movement of economic energies away from extractive pursuits towards those of processing and distribution, the Latin American city was the source of energy and organization for the exploitation of natural resources" (Morse, p.75). The fact that Latin America was forced to interact as part of the international community meant that, for much of the past century, it was forced to depend upon colonial powers for its executive functions. The city represented that power in its administrative, political, and economic aspects. Therefore, the second stage is characterized by a centripetal tendency resulting from that dependence and by the necessities of an economy almost exclusively devoted towards the export of natural resources. This stage did not end with independence but, rather, was intensified with the growing integration of the region into the world market.

Germani found that the tendency to link the points of extraction towards the locations of primary production, largely through the implementation of railways,

neglected large segments of national territory. This resulted in the major cities being transformed into 'islands of modernity' where wealth tended to be secured and segregated amongst an elite few who's influence tended to be more parasitic than direct. The dual character of the economy and resulting social structures were enhanced over time and as the urban population increased, urban primacy increased accordingly as the direct result of a legacy of export economies based specifically upon the exploitation of primary resources.

Therefore, in most Latin American cities there are widespread disparities between income and wealth, power and status, comfort and struggle, that generally separates the elite from the remainder of the population. While it is true that the majority of those in the city generally enjoy a higher standard of living than the bulk of the rural poor, the middle class is typically quite small and most strive to cope for daily subsistence much the same fashion as their rural counterparts. That being said, it is extremely difficult to arrive at a general consensus on how best to adequately define the urban poor in a given city let alone throughout the region. Nonetheless, according to Beier (1984) there are certain indicators that generally apply which "depend upon a combination of benefits from items purchased, plus earnings from assets such as housing and utilities, plus direct consumption of public services such as schools and clinics. Failure to secure any one these important income streams in an economical way at a reasonable standard [often results in a situation of poverty]" (Ghosh, p.72). Despite the complicated nature of poverty, it is important to note that more often than not, governments in the region are unresponsive to the general needs of their poorest constituents, either due to a lack of will or resources, as a result most nations are rarely able to make significant structural alterations through the electoral process.

This is particularly the case for rural populations who may only participate marginally in most national elections. Their plight is intimately linked with that of the urban poor because the most common response of the rural masses to neglect is, as Gugler (1992) suggests, to vote with their feet, forming a large rural-urban migration stream that often cannot be absorbed into the urban economy as productively as it once was. This is one reason why, even as Latin American cities were becoming increasingly diverse and the urban poor began to represent a greater percentage of the urban population than ever before, the common perception of the region remained that it is generally conservative in nature. Despite numerous uprisings in Central America, the Cuban Revolution, and populist governments in Chile and Argentina, Latin American elites have been able to suppress genuine structural transformations towards more socialist ideologies through a variety of measures which will be discussed in greater detail within the following sections. Nevertheless, the totalitarian nature of many governments in the region, at least up until 1980, and the considerable influence of the United States left very little opportunity for public discourse on the topic of democratic transition from a Leftist, populist perspective. As a result, the Left was relegated to the periphery of most political discussions, or excluded completely, and the region was erroneously characterized as socially and politically conservative.

1.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Initially, theoretical perspectives and an analytical framework will be constructed to discuss the various issues surrounding New Social Movements in an attempt to arrive at some sort of conclusion about their composition and organization. New Social Movements will be considered according to a world systems perspective because it seems to offer the ideal discourse to articulate the structural conditions that contribute to

urban poverty in Latin America. It represents the ideal dichotomy to the prevailing neo-liberal policies embraced by most Latin American governments and also compliments the socio-analysis of Liberation Theology, which has had a tremendous impact upon the majority of New Social Movements in the region.

1.4 Methodology

As a thesis based largely upon secondary source material and a discussion of primary source studies by researchers in this field, I will attempt to construct a theoretical framework based upon a World Systems perspective corroborated through various case studies, each exemplifying varying degrees of success according to the means employed and the environment in which they operated. Initially, a comparative analysis of the two cases within Mexico City serves an excellent basis for displaying how a unique situation can have a tremendous impact upon the consequences of mass mobilization; the Mexico City earthquake and the subsequent struggle for urban renewal in contrast to Eckstein's study of the ongoing struggle many inner-city organizations continue to contest, with only limited or marginal success. Was it that the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the earthquake precipitated a mass movement that was more likely to succeed based upon events and influence outside its direct control or was it that the movement was able adequately correlate its demands with those of the rest of society and those organizations within Eckstein's study simply have not? In addition, a distinction must be made between movements consumed by the provision of certain fundamental services and those concerned with the larger issues of structural oppression. What is the nature of their relationship and does the actions of one hinder the efforts of the other?

Another obvious distinction must be made between organization and mass mobilization. When does collective organization, or even an urban protest movement operating strictly at the local level, become mobilized into a New Social Movement concerned with structural issues of poverty and what is the nature of that transition? In addition, what are the dynamics within a New Social Movement and the nature of the relationships which comprise it? There is a tremendous body of literature in addition to what has been included in the Theoretical Framework devoted to the success or failure of these movements, both from a Latin American perspective and general consensus, which should shed some light on these questions.

Within the scope of this inquiry, are included issues such as attempting to define a New Social Movement, the nature of urban protest, patterns of political integration and conflict, liberation theology and the role of the Catholic Church in New Social Movements, and the discrepancies with liberal democratic capitalism within the region. Each serves as a pivotal component to the larger analysis of the success of collective organization and mass mobilization. It is my opinion that the evidence strongly suggests that unless New Social Movements in Mexico in particular, and Latin America in general, address the structural conditions of urban poverty, they will never alleviate its underlying causes.

1.5 Thesis Statement

Therefore, my Thesis Statement is: **New social movements in Latin America are intrinsically bound by the global suppression of peripheral regions perpetuated primarily through the hegemony of Liberal Democratic Capitalism and, therefore, must address this reality if they endeavour to alleviate urban poverty**. Accordingly,

by considering the issue of Latin American urban poverty within this context, a pattern should emerge within the following sections to substantiate this statement.

2. Theoretical Perspectives and Analytical Framework

2.1 A Theory of New Social Movements

In order to properly evaluate the influence of New Social Movements and the rationale behind their mobilization, it is necessary to provide the parameters through which they can be defined. No easy task. Social movements specifically, and political activism in general, are not homogeneous in nature and therefore, rarely subscribe to a universally accepted definition. The primary reason why that New Social Movements are often characterized according to a variety of classifications. They first gained prominence when the study of sociology began to be dissected into various sub-fields during the sixties and seventies. One of the results of this dissection was the emerging field of urban sociology which emphasized social change from below as a neglected focus of investigation. From this perspective, Castells (1976) defines a social movement as "an organization of the system of actors (conjuncture of class relations) leading to the production of a qualitatively new effect on the social structure." At the practical level, this will result in "a change in the balance of forces in a direction counter to institutionalized social domination, the most characteristic of which is a substantial change in the system of authority (i.e. in the political-legal apparatus) or in the organization of counter-domination (strengthening of class organizations)" (Castells, p.151).

If one were to extend this definition further to include the notion of 'urban social movements', Castells contends that they are simply derivatives of the larger issue. He concludes that an urban social movement can be defined as

> "the system of practices resulting from the articulation of a conjuncture of the system of urban actors and other social practices, such that its development tends objectively towards the structural transformation of the urban system or towards a substantial change in the balance of forces within the political system as a whole" (ibid., p. 155).

Therefore, inherent to any social movement is a challenge to the existing social reality and some measure of opposition to the structural rigidity of society, with the intention of transforming the relationship (economic, political, cultural, ext.) between all of those who exist within it (i.e. those generally considered the elite and those marginalized as a result of the current state of affairs).

Furthermore, Smith (1991) suggests that "movements organized around issues of culture, identity, life-style or place have become known, in recent discussions of social change, as new social movements" (p.27) and are best understood in relation to the political system within which they persist. In addition, Kling and Posner (1991) argue that "new social movements lack a centring theoretic principle, and can only be understood in relation to the particular societies, histories, cultures, and political and economic structures within which they take shape. [As such these] movements are [typically] organized around grievances and identities which are distinct from the workplace and process of production" (p.27). This working definition, despite its ambiguous nature, emphasizes the fact that the term 'New Social Movement' can mean many different things to many different people while, at the same time, providing a foundation from which future references may be derived.

Perhaps Evers defined the ideal articulation of a New Social Movement when he presented his four theses on the subject with respect to Latin America in 1985. He argues that four basic qualities can generally define a New Social Movement in the region (p.49-61), in their attitudes and activities, and these should serve as a template for all future discussions. His first thesis argues that the transformatory potential within New Social Movements is not political, but socio-cultural and that this could, in the long

run, prove to be more incontestable and irreversible than many abrupt changes within various power structures because it is rooted in the everyday practice and in the corresponding basic orientations in which all social structures have their foundations. In this regard, the socio-cultural potential of New Social Movements may turn out to be more politically contentious than the traditional attempts at revolution or running for office despite the fact they may not be directly concentrated towards existing power structures.

His second thesis is that the direction of this counter-cultural remodelling of social patterns is relatively open, constituting the reverse side of the social sphere that is recognized only with respect to the front, or prevailing ideology. New Social Movements are inserted into the dominant social and political context of their respective nationalities and regions. Considering the relentless pressure of this reality, any pattern not conforming will appear to be weak, implausible, fragmented, disorganized, discontinuous, and contradictory. New Social Movements make their appearance upon the fringes of society, in response to various shortcomings of the dominant culture that generally appear along its margins or periphery. The alternatives open to these movements are to either yield to the weight of reality, accepting a certain breathing space and perhaps some spoils of power, as an established opposition within the framework of existing society at the price of resigning itself to its position; or to try to uphold an identity of its own, at the price of remaining weak, inefficient, and plagued by contradictions until their cause is recognized as legitimate.

The third thesis surrounds the central aspects of the counter-cultural construction within New Social Movements that can be understood alongside the 'alienation-identity' dichotomy. Alienation serves as a significant precursor for recognition, mobilization,

and autonomy from traditional structures of power as a necessary identity. Evers found that New Social Movements generally "define themselves as new and distinctive with regard to traditional politics and...the founders and wardens of their own traditions of social knowledge [because] the quest for this autonomous identity is directed against the historical paternalism which characterizes traditional Latin American politics" (p.45).

The fourth thesis argues that together with the emergence of an alternative project, New Social Movements procreate the genesis of their corresponding subjects. In the process of creating new patterns of socio-cultural practices and reconstructing fragments of an autonomous identity, the individuals involved, as well as the group as a whole, constitute themselves as the direct subjects of this process. According to Marxist thought, individuals have an objective propensity towards the formation of social classes but it would seem this is not the case for social transformation in Latin America. Evers concludes that "we can no longer conceive a positive utopia as a fixed historical aim to be reached through pre-established means, but as a long and sinuous process of emancipation whose end, if there is one, is unknown" (p.59).

Sonia Alvarez (1997), during her extensive research of Brazilian social movements, emphasizes the fact that these movements, urban or otherwise, do not exist in a vacuum isolated from other like-minded individuals or the political realities they face. That regardless of their size or mandate, a movement must be judged by the extent to which it is able to permeate vertically and horizontally throughout society through a series of informal 'webs' it has developed with these other actors. She concludes that "when evaluating the impact of social movements on larger processes of political change... we must understand the reach of social movements as extending beyond their conspicuous constitutive parts and visible manifestations of protest" (Alvarez, p.90).

Subsequently, the effectiveness of a social movement should only be evaluated according to the extent to which it has been incorporated into the larger state and cultural arenas, how it has influenced local political and cultural institutions, and what kind of impact those institutions have had on it.

This relatively optimistic characterization nonetheless places movements squarely within the realm of their greater society and underscores the necessity that they should not be treated as islands of alternative values separated from those around them who may or may not share their point of view. Too often than not movements are judged according to the same criteria as political parties and other voluntary organizations. Membership and mobilization, or lack thereof, can often overshadow commitment and determination. This is usually misguided according to Alvarez because

> "the political demands, discourses, and practices and the mobilization and policy strategies of movements are spread widely, and sometimes invisibly, through the social fabric, as their political/communicative webs stretch to envelop the institutional and the cultural and thus reach into parliaments, the academy, the church, the media, and the like. [M]ovement webs encompass more than movement organizations and their active members" (Alvarez, p.90).

Therefore, simply analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of one individual movement may not adequately convey the impact it may have upon its local or regional surroundings if it neglects the relationships it has fostered as a result of its organization and network.

Dwivedi (1997) places New Social Movement theory into a Latin American context by making the distinction that in the region the majority are characterized by the multiplicity of action groups that are often in direct opposition to the state and other political and socio-cultural institutions rather than the economic ruling class of their particular nation, city, or neighbourhood. These struggles are often over meanings as

much as resources and can be judged as both economic and cultural in essence and understood in terms of a piecemeal resistance where people are as interested in controlling the meaning of their lives as they are in controlling the assets and results of their production.

Given the fact that there are numerous philosophies concerning New Social Movement theory that may be characterized from conservative to radical, the context of this investigation must be articulated. If one follows the typical Western ideology, exemplified by Kriesi, among others, and speaking from the perspective of European New Social Movement theory based upon Habermasian philosophy, the rise in the number of New Social Movements can be attributed to "the colonization of the life world by systematic imperatives [which] implies, among other things, the shift of control from the local, parochial level to the national, state level as well as the shift of control from individual to corporate actors in general. The groups most deeply affected by this loss of control come together in new social movements" (Tarrow, p.57). Therefore, they must articulate a grievance to the rest of society which they deem unacceptable. These grievances become the central component behind the mobilization and perpetuation of most movements because in this sense collective identity relies upon the perception of unjust treatment.

Shefner (1999) suggests that these grievances are an inherent component of any type of collective action and should be considered an important feature in determining the eventual success or failure of a social movement because they structurally influence their direction and context. Grievances have the propensity to generate indignation and outrage and therefore, influence whether movements emerge and how long they survive. Accordingly, one can argue they represent the most pivotal aspect of social movement

organization because they "help determine what potential actors are affected, who gets organized, with what resources, and what allies are available. Grievances define a field of confrontation with the state or other collective action targets. Grievances also mould collective action frames, as framers determine how to mobilize political actors by highlighting the problems to which collective actors respond" (p.392). In this fashion, they feed popular discontent that nurtures opposition and the state's inability to properly address this discontent provides an ideal opportunity for mobilization. If one considers the Mexican debt crisis during the eighties, which will be elaborated upon further in later sections, it becomes obvious that grievances served as a determining factor in the mobilization of various factions that recognized the value of a collective agenda.

Grievances also affect how coalitions are formed and often determine various tactics against the opposition. Shefner contends that, again, the Mexican debt crisis serves as a valuable example. As the crisis persisted, the middle class in particular reacted to "declining employment, decreasing credit for small businesses, reduced subsidies, and the devastation of small businesses.... The ongoing history of authoritarian politics, another grievance, continued to nurture citizen anger. These grievances encouraged segments of the middle class to seek out new political alternatives" (p.379). The resulting austerity protests provide another window into how initial grievances influence tactics. The immediate response to the austerity measures were a series of protests aimed directly at the institutions in question; buses were destroyed as a response to the increased transportation costs and grocery stores were looted in response to the hyperinflation which precipitated numerous escalations in the cost of food. In both of these cases, grievances were crucial in determining tactics and targets.

Despite the variety of opinions on New Social Movement theory, much of which is contextualized within Western political thought, there are according to Tarrow (1989), five major characteristics that typify these movements in general. The first are *values* in the sense that New Social Movements are seen as anti-modernistic and rejecting the premise of a society based primarily upon economic growth and modernization. They are characterized by their *actions and organization*. New Social Movements are seen to make extensive use of unconventional forms of action and to be antagonistic to politics. They generally prefer small-scale, decentralized organizations, are anti-hierarchical in nature, and usually favour direct democracy. Their *constituency* is their third characteristic. These movements often recruit disproportionately from the two groups affected particularly by a perceived loss of control: those who pay the costs of the modernization process and those who are particularly sensitive to problems resulting from it. The final two characteristics are often debated. There are those who believe New Social Movements are the result of *new aspirations* that are inherently linked to a change in values. Often, this can be based upon material prosperity leading to post-material values. Increased prosperity can also create increased demand for access to scarce goods, many of which are termed 'positional goods' like better living surroundings or a decent education. There are others who view movement participation with respect to the *satisfaction of needs becoming endangered*. This group saw the rise of new movements as the result of increased social strain related to industrialization and bureaucratization, leading to a loss of identity and to the decline of traditional ties and loyalties. It must be mentioned that connected to any discussion of collective action, the probability that people will engage in these sorts of activities will vary as a function of

the depth of their grievances, the availability of alternative means of expression, and the perceived costs and risks of such action.

Sheldon Stryker (2000) makes a convincing argument that the search for a collective identity provides the impetus behind the mobilization of many New Social Movements. Drawing much of his information from Melucci, he suggests that "the new social movement perspective sees a collective search for identity as a fundamental movement activity" (p.23). He refers to Melucci's definition of collective identity in his influential study *The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements* (1985) as "shared beliefs making collective action possible". Taken to its logical conclusion, "the concept of collective identity refers to the (often implicitly) agreed upon definition of membership, boundaries, and activities for the group" (ibid. p.23). Furthermore, Stryker endorses the conclusions of Taylor (1989) by arguing that collective identity can be seen as a "shared definition of a group deriving from common interests, experiences, and solidarity, involving a we-feeling, constructed, activated, and sustained through interaction in movement communities". Therefore, "collective identities are shaped by commonalities bringing persons into movements and by interaction and common experiences within them" (ibid. p.23).

It is apparent that the majority of New Social Movement theorists tend to focus upon the identity considerations of those individuals already participating in social movements and place special emphasis upon relationships with individuals not directly involved in a movement which reinforce the movement participation of others. Deriving from this focus is the fact that ideology becomes the central component to most movement literature and,

> "little attention is paid to external identities inhibiting the joining of movements or minimizing participation in movements joined. Insofar as they merge individual and collective identity, conceptions of identity in the New Social Movement literature obviate the utility of the concept to account for differential involvement in movement activities" (Stryker, p.25).

The result is often that "New Social Movement theorists assert that movement collective identity is expressed in the everyday activities of movement members and that relationships to networks external to movements reinforce network commitments and ideology" (ibid. p.29). Simply stated, a New Social Movement is a reaction to the existing social reality that is constantly reinforced by the activities of those individuals external to the movement. It becomes a vicious circle where members become increasingly motivated by the actions of those who do not share their point of view as their frustration level mounts by the perceived inactivity of those around them.

There are others, including Gecas (2000), who emphasize the importance of collective identity to New Social Movement theory by asserting that political conflicts in modern societies are becoming increasingly centred around the specific issue of identity. Accordingly, these identity conflicts are more likely to be inherently value-based than class-based even if they manifest themselves through perceived class alliances. It is for this reason that they are best articulated through New Social Movements. Gecas feels that value identities are unique, and an important component of New Social Movement literature, because "they place greater emphasis on the cultural and moral context of self-definitions and provide the terms within which concepts of justice and injustice take shape" (Gecas, p.105). This makes the issue of identity an essential ingredient to any collective mobilization and emphasizes how the values of different individuals manifest themselves through a collective class consciousness which, more often than not, takes

the form of a New Social Movement when that consciousness is deemed to be oppressed.

Wallerstein (1990) defines many of the current New Social Movements with respect to the famous slogan of the French Revolution 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'. He concludes that the "struggle of the oppressed 'working classes' to obtain liberty (full rights of political participation, access to a secure economic base to make possible political and social choice, social control over the workplace and living space), equality (elimination of political, economic, and social differentials), and fraternity (mutual aid and solidarity of the working classes which would thereby make possible fraternity for all humanity)" (Wallerstein, p.13-14) are the fundamental motivations behind their mobilization. Furthermore, he emphasizes the need for the political organization of such movements as inherent to any success they may achieve. He points to the Revolution of 1848 in France as a turning point for modern societies because it " marked the first time that a proletarian-based political group made a serious attempt to achieve political power and legitimize workers' power" (ibid. p.16). Even though it was eventually defeated and a return to 'Bonapartism' in the form of a military dictatorship with limited concessions became the order of the day, Wallerstein feels that "the primary lesson to be drawn from the experience of 1848 was the need for *long-term* political organization as the necessary tool with which their objectives might be achieved. It became the strategic axiom of all significant movements ever since" (ibid. p.17- his italics) and therefore, a defining moment for the development of social movements in the years to come.

It seems that any discussion of New Social Movements must respect the conclusions of Smith, Kling, and Posner. The fact that New Social Movements are distinct from traditional organizations such as labour unions and political parties is more

than obvious. One could argue that this is generally the case because they are often organized around issues of culture and identity which transcend the workplace and usually the local political system as well. The very fact that traditional modes of expression have so often failed to result in sufficient gains for their members have led to this new form of remonstration. Even so, it must be noted that Alvarez's conclusion that the effectiveness of these movements must be evaluated according to the extent to which they have been incorporated into the larger state and cultural arenas cannot be denied. They are simply a new mode of expression for those marginalized by, have rejected, or been denied access to traditional methods of articulating grievances who endeavour to alter the social reality of their environment through a collective effort emphasizing local, regional, and global injustices.

2.2 The Organization of New Social Movements in Latin America: When Does Urban Protest Constitute a New Social Movement?

An obvious question arising from any discussion of collective action is under what conditions does mass mobilization come under the control of movement organization? In other words, when does an urban protest constitute a New Social Movement or how does it become institutionalized? Again, there appears to be a number of opinions but each seems to fall under the discretion of two basic philosophies; those who believe that the collective energy of poor people can only be released and directed towards concrete goals by specific organizers; and those who argue that organizers deaden the disruptive impact of disorder. Regardless of the particular perspective, a consensus is that, as a general rule, the relationship between these movements and their organizational apparatus is that movement organizations both precede and follow from larger waves of mass mobilization. Tarrow (1989) believes

that certain pre-existing social movements will stimulate the rise of a new wave of collective action with their themes, their networks, and their knowledge of organization. As mobilization increases, new movements are created by prospective leaders to take advantage of this increased propensity towards participation. As mobilization declines, these movements either disband, move into institutions, or redirect their struggle by substituting organization for numbers.

It is important to analyze the transformation of urban protest into a New Social Movement because, as Fox and Starn (1997) suggest, although we may have reached a new phase in global development, dissention among those excluded from its prosperity remains consistent. They argue that,

> "Whereas the old dream of total transformation through armed revolution may have faded in recent years, mobilization around a stunning diversity of causes signals a continued willingness to enter into open confrontation with the powers-that-be, warning against the facile view of the present as a 'postideological' or 'postpolitical' epoch" (Fox and Starn, p.2).

Therefore, in accordance with this assertion, social protest, in all of its manifestations, should be perceived in terms of a perpetual process. Fox and Starn conclude that "by exploring how individual dissent does (or does not) turn into mass action, we underscore that social protest should be understood as a process of becoming rather than as an already achieved state, the typical premise in too much of the literature on social movements" (ibid, p.6). This is indeed the case because by conceiving a social movement as the initial stage in the development of a greater social consciousness, we allow for the possibility of that consciousness to be implemented and accepted by the general public. As long as a social movement is perceived as an already achieved state, it will never have the desired affect of structural transformation because it will continue to be viewed as external to those it endeavours to influence.

Therefore, according to Slater (1985), New Social Movements in Latin America focus their protest primarily around three features. The first surrounds the excessive centralization of decision-making power within the apparatus of the state coupled with acute and ever increasing administrative inefficiency. Secondly, the state's inability to provide adequate services in the area of collective means of consumption; such as urban amenities, water, electricity, health, and transportation results in a general discontent that manifests itself most clearly among the urban poor. The third issue focuses upon the steadily eroding legitimacy of the state combined with an accentuated scepticism towards established political parties that has led to an articulation of social demands that do not flow directly through the pre-existing channels of political incorporation and control, thus invigorating alternative sources such as New Social Movements. He argues that "the nature of state-society relations, the origin and character of the dominant political discourse, the forms of insertion into world capitalist economy, and the variegated composition of social forces [that] mould the potentiality and range of political effectiveness of these movements" (p.11) will become more significant with the contraction of capitalist development and the devastating socio-economic effects of the debt crisis in the region.

While this corresponds with the primary focus of this inquiry; New Social Movements, structural change, and the urban poor, it is necessary to define what constitutes an urban movement and how they may differ from one another. To this end, Henry (1985) provides a comprehensive analysis of various urban movements throughout Latin America that can be divided into five categories (p.127-47). The first are *Territorial Movements* that correspond to a set of collective practices and behaviour that lead to the creation of popular neighbourhoods in ways that depart from the

established norms and the institutional mechanisms of the city. Housing crises create struggles which clash with the legal norms governing access to urban land, bring about changes in the rules of engagement, give rise to institutional responses, and substantially alter the face of the city in question.

The second are *Issue-Oriented Movements* that primarily concerned with urban consolidation and access to basic services and amenities. They may also become involved in issues of individual consumption and survival strategies for families, especially during times of severe austerity, but their demands are usually directed towards the state rather than municipalities. This can often give neighbourhood associations a much higher degree of legitimacy and representativity than those authorities in the eyes of the residents.

Sectoral or Conjunctural Movements are the third category. Obviously popular neighbourhoods are not the only areas directly affected by urban issues. There are forms of mobilization which affect the social strata that cannot be regarded as belonging to the popular sectors, particularly in the case of the middle classes. Therefore, conjunctural actions are generally undertaken as a reaction against public policies. They set the stage for direct confrontation between social groups for control of space, amenities, and services. Other segments of the petty bourgeoisie or popular sectors whose economic activities are also connected with urban life can become mobilized as well (teachers, municipal workers, ext.). These movements are generally comprised of a variety of activists who tend to act spontaneously, are ephemeral and episodic, and often do not put forward a global project.

Urban Revolts are the fourth category and are generally considered the widespread mobilization of large segments of the urban population during periods of sudden and

intense 'pauperization' that usually results from a worsening of an economic crisis. In Mexico, unexpected and conceivably irrational revolts, apparently doomed from the beginning, tend to occur repeatedly whenever the state is unable to act effectively as both employment and real wages are forced down as a result of international pressures. At times, urban revolts provide popular and logistical support for strike movements without which their actions could be seriously compromised. Such support generates a territorial dynamics where demands related to employment are combined with consumer demands. These forms of revolt are less organic in character than other movements but clearly bring into question the legitimacy of power.

Regional and National Movements are the final category. In a number of countries, the state is subject to attacks from movements which go beyond sectoral actions carried out by class blocs and must be seen in a perspective of social transformation. *Regional Movements* support the constitution of class blocs such as regional strikes and municipal stoppages but is more to these movements than simply opposition to central authorities and a celebration of regional power. They generally do not constitute long-term class alliances and are usually not the bearers of specific historical projects. However, they do constitute a social force which is able to impose partial modifications to certain administrative and redistributive practices. *National Processes* are more advanced because they are oriented towards the historical transformation of their given society. Therefore, the configuration of social movements as they may be able to contribute to the overthrow of a regime and the subsequent seizure of power must be examined. In Nicaragua, for example, the Mangua earthquake precipitated an economic depression that significantly lowered living standards and had an enormous impact on the urban masses that was followed by a major offensive by the

Sandinistas that eventually resulted in the destruction of the Samoza regime. Impoverishment, repression, and urban scarcity provided the incentive that ultimately led to the participation of the urban masses in the eventual seizure of power.

Each category represents an urban movement in the sense that they imply the active participation of the urban population; that their territorially based organizations are involved in determining the direction of that struggle; and due to the mobilizing effects of urban contradictions, become more visible in an urban context. They should be considered social movements to the extent that they represent the emergence of individuals who are endowed with their own base of support and whose actions are articulated within other dimensions of a popular movement. They respond to crisis situations rather than acting as the bearers of an alternative project of historical transformation.

To be considered more than acts of mere protest each of these movements depends upon sustained mobilization. One of the first, and most compelling, perspectives on the nature of mobilization and the institutionalization of social movements was postulated by Amitai Etzioni in 1968 with his influential publication of *The Active Society*. It analyzed the nature of social movements with regard primarily to the transformation of totalitarian states, with special emphasis on the former Soviet Union and China. Despite the fact that much of his research has a distinctly European perspective, it nonetheless proves valuable in evaluating the nature of social movements in most developing countries, especially Latin America, due to the history of strong, centralized states in the region and the propensity towards the political and economic marginalization of vast segments of society.

Etzioni suggests that, while social movements can play a pivotal role in the avocation and promotion of certain ideals due to the strong commitment of their members, the movement itself will often become bureaucratized and domineering as it strives to justify its own existence over time. He explains that social movements are

> "characterized by a high level of activation [amongst] members. While there is no elaborate machinery of control, the effective chain of leadership as the deep normative commitments of the membership allow the movement to 'run' more on influence than on power. The low level of internal bureaucratization, the broad participation, the close relationship between means and widely shared goals, and the drama of success and rapid change encourage high mobilization and a high rate of collective action" (Etzioni, p.525).

But this apparent optimism quickly dissipates during his analysis of social movements over the long-term, resulting in a very interesting question that should serve as the focus of attention for anyone endeavouring to determine the protracted role of social movements after certain rudimental goals have been achieved. He concludes that

> "the social movement 'organization' is inherently unstable, short-lived, and soon becomes more bureaucratized, first imposing itself on others (non-members) and soon on its own membership. Influence turns into persuasion, and frequently persuasion is increasingly backed by force. The question, hence, is not how to maintain a social movement organization permanently (which seems a utopian effort), but how to maintain some of its features, in particular the high level of commitment and participation" (ibid. p.525).

This would seem to be the underlying question regarding New Social Movements in Latin America as well. How can the level of participation and commitment be sustained, both during those times when membership is dejected over a perceived lack of success on a specific issue or after a crucial mandate has been attained? Once that initial momentum has subsided, are New Social Movements destined to follow this pattern of institutionalization and irrelevancy? According to Etzioni, those who survive do so by becoming increasingly bureaucratized and less

involved with the specific issues of their inception. They become more ideologically based by focusing upon societal concerns which often transcend the parameters of their individual locales. In accordance with the previous argument by Alvarez, this connects them to other like-minded organizations and provides the necessary justification for an indefinite struggle, which may have little to do with their original mandate, but incorporates them into the larger 'web' of those organizations.

Furthermore, according to Touraine (1985) while social movements are similar to traditional forms of protest in that they "are always defined by a social conflict, that is, by clearly defined opponents" (p.772) they differ in that they "are not positive or negative agents of history, of modernization, or of the liberation of mankind. They act in a given type of social production and organization" (p.773). His contention that this is the primary reason why structural conflicts are always emphasized as having priority (long-term consequences) over historical movements is well taken while also providing an important distinction between the two.

Offe (1985) argues that New Social Movements are distinct from mere forms of collective protest in that they "politicize themes which cannot easily be coded within the binary code of the universe of social action that underlies liberal political theory" (p.826). Inherent to liberal political theory is the notion that all actions can be categorized within either the private or public domain, and that public automatically amounts to the political. New Social Movements claim an issue for themselves which falls outside the parameters of these two categories; they are neither private in the sense that it is of no legitimate concern to others, nor public in that it is recognized as the legitimate object of official political institutions and representatives. Consequently, Offe concludes that "the space of action of the new movements is a space of

noninstitutional politics which is not provided for in the doctrines and practices of liberal democracy and the welfare state" (p.826- his italics).

This admittedly Western perspective nonetheless proves valuable in the analysis of Latin American New Social Movements because most of the issues are global in context or volatile due to the fact that traditional political institutions have proven to be inadequate or unresponsive. New Social Movements in the South may have limited experience with liberal democracy or the welfare state but still exist within the realm of noninstitutional politics simply because their concerns obviously extend beyond the private realm but in most cases institutional support is noticeably absent. Noninstitutional politics differs from the private realm of action in that the participants make "some explicit claim that the means of action can be recognized as legitimate and the ends of action can become binding for the larger community" (p.826-27). Therefore, a necessary feature of this transition is the recognition by participants, authorities, and the public that this has indeed occurred. Once collective action is acknowledged as attaining these two components, noninstitutionalization and recognition, it ceases to be mere protest and evolves into a larger movement. Social movements in general, and New Social Movements in particular, must evolve from a smaller constituency as their concerns become more widely accepted. They may also recede back to this initial constituency but mass mobilization always follows collective action regardless if the waves of that mobilization precipitate further action.

Mobilization, therefore, becomes the most important component of collective action. Accordingly, Tilly (1978) has done extensive research into the maturation process of protest and has determined that the extent of a group's collective action is a function of primarily six influences. The extent of its shared *interests*, defined as the

advantages and disadvantages likely to result from interactions with other groups. The intensity of its *organization*, which is usually the extent of shared common identities and unifying structures among its members. Internal *mobilization* can be defined as the amount of resources under its collective control. Perceived *repression* is any action by another group which raises the contenders cost of collective action. The influence of *power* is the extent to which one party's interests prevail over others with which it is in conflict. The final influence is a perceived *opportunity* or *threat* that can be defined as the extent of anticipated change in the group's realization of its interests and the probability that change will occur.

Obviously these six influences will vary a great deal depending upon the situation and type of collective action in question. It is also interesting to note that, with the exception of internal motivation, which is generally dependent upon external sources, each is a function of an external relationship between the collective and those who oppose it. Therefore, one can conclude that the extent of a group's collective action is a function of its direct relationship with those it is in conflict. Mobilization is less dependent on internal structures than it is on external influences and the manner with which they are perceived and manipulated.

In addition, Offe argues that New Social Movements exhibit many common characteristics. While the universality of these characteristics may be called into question, I believe that with regard to Latin America three of his categories are applicable (p.828-31). The first characteristic surrounds *issues*. The dominant issues of New Social Movements generally consist in the concern with a (physical) territory, space of action, or 'life-world' such as the body, health, and sexual identity; the neighbourhood, city, and the physical environment; the cultural, ethnic, national, and

linguistic heritage and identity; the physical conditions of life, and survival for humankind in general. *Values* are the second characteristic. Most prominent among these values are autonomy and identity and opposition to manipulation, control, and dependence. The final characteristic are the *modes of action* these movements generally choose. This typically involves two aspects, the mode by which individuals act together in order to constitute a collectivity (internal modes of action) and the methods by which they confront the external world and their political opponents (external modes of action). The internal mode, which is the mode by which multitudes of individuals become collective actors, is highly informal, ad hoc, discontinuous, context-sensitive, and egalitarian. There seems to be a strong reliance on the fusion of public and private roles, instrumental and expressive behaviour, community and organization, and in particular a poor and at best transient demarcation between roles of 'members' and formal leaders. Within the external mode of action we find demonstration tactics and other forms of action making use of the physical presence of (large numbers of) people. These protest tactics are intended to mobilize public attention by (mostly) legal though unconventional means.

With regard to the final category, it is important to note that these movements rarely relate to other political actors and opponents in terms of compromise, reform, improvement, or gradual progress but rather in sharp antinomies such as us/them, yes/no, and victory/defeat. Therefore, from this perspective New Social Movements are at a distinct disadvantage in any negotiating process since they have very little, and often absolutely nothing, to offer in return for concessions made to their demands. This is partially due to the fact that they tend not to operate as a formal organization, such as a trade union, but has more to do with an inherent feature that typically "their central

concern [is] of such high and universal priority that no part of it can be meaningfully sacrificed (e.g., in issues linked to the values of 'survival' or 'identity') without negating the concern itself" (p.831). This rigidity also differentiates New Social Movements from simple acts of protest. Protestors can often be pacified through various concessions made by the state, movements generally cannot.

It seems that obtaining a collective identity is the key for mere acts of protest to become mobilized into a larger movement. In this sense, Stryker supports the conclusions of Melucci when he characterized this identity as "a learning process that leads to the formation and maintenance of a unified empirical actor that we can call a social movement...the binding element of political protest [is when] collective identity becomes politicized" (Stryker, p.69-70). Through this process, he argues that,

> "causal attributions disseminated by social and political actors give circumstances and social categories their political meaning, which is further confirmed by interactions with authorities. It is this reciprocity of causal attributions and encounters with opponents that produce the potentially explosive mix of shared moral indignation and oppositional consciousness that makes collective identity politically significant" (ibid, p.70-71).

Another essential component of collective identity is group identification. According to this perspective, group identification is "a product of self-categorization- a cognitive representation of the self as an embodiment of a more inclusive category, accompanied by an awareness of similarity, ingroup identity, and shared fate with others who belong to that category" (Stryker, p.153). Furthermore, it is "a shift towards the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self as unique" (ibid. p.153). Once a social identity is recognized, "a shared understanding of group attributes, norms, and goals (the group prototype) is sufficient to produce uniformity of behaviour and purpose among those who share that

identity" (ibid, p.154). This is crucial because the ability to mobilize collective action and attract new members entails a social identification which becomes the movement's most important asset. It maintains the group dynamic, provides its social character, and enables it to expand by attracting those with similar goals and convictions. Therefore, collective identity is formed through a shared experience of struggle. Once this has occurred, urban protest and mass mobilization on any scale matures into a social movement and is a primary reason why the former always precedes the latter.

2.3 Political Participation and Integration According to Liberal Democratic Capitalism, Dependency Theory, and World Systems Theory; Urban Protest from a World Systems Perspective

Given that political integration, structural transformation, and the conditions that enable or suppress each are at the heart of this inquiry, it is important to look at how different schools of thought view their prospects within the context of development. An obvious beginning is to compare and contrast dependency theory, which emerged from the region and uses it as a primary source of reference; world systems theory, which is intimately related to dependency but provides a broader social analysis by not focusing so vehemently upon economics; and liberal democratic capitalism (neo-liberalism), which has emerged as the dominant theory of development within donor agencies and nations. As one would imagine, these three schools of thought consider the prospects for the universal political participation of an entire population in slightly different terms. Therefore, each considers the inevitable social transformation that accompanies the political integration of an entire society according to their perspective of what development entails and whether it is even a legitimate objective in the first place.

Liberal Democratic Capitalism or Neo-liberalism, although inherently economic and based primarily upon the historical experiences of more 'developed' nations in the

West, is the predominant philosophy of the Bretton Woods institutions and most donor nations and therefore, must be addressed. It assumes that after a nation attains a certain level of development the gains of growth will begin to spread naturally throughout society. As this process continues, the middle class expands accordingly and their demand for political participation and inclusion will increase. Those relegated to the margins of society obtain a political and social voice through the acquisition of employment predicated upon free market forces. Democracy is, therefore, the end result of an expanding middle class within an economy based primarily upon consumption. From this perspective, political participation and distribution of net gains, even if they are unequal, are regarded as the automatic consequences of economic growth and industrialization.

Dependency Theory, or neo-Marxism, looks at the development of nations in relation to the position they occupy within the global economy. Its proponents believe that countries located in the periphery, or less developed countries, do not experience the same patterns of development as Western European and North American nations because the most obvious characteristic of their development stems from the fact that its source and dynamics are external to their individual economies. Therefore, they experience a qualitatively different form of development in which economic growth does not lead to a wider distribution of income or equal opportunities for political participation. This is the case due to distortions in the economy where internal linkages are destroyed or weakened and created or replaced with linkages to external sectors instead. It, therefore, becomes more responsive to external rather than internal deviations. This, in turn, creates vulnerabilities because the source of growth lies largely outside national control making the structure of the economy very rigid and unable to

diversify. In this sense, due to the nature of the relationship between dependent nations in the periphery and the more industrialized nations of the core, any economic downturn within the core, or a disruption in the distribution and transportation of supplies, will have a much more adverse effect upon the dependent countries of the periphery.

Another feature of this relationship, with regard to political participation and the prospects for integration, is that economic and social development within peripheral nations tends to be characterized by uneven growth and the eventual marginalization of certain social groups. The propensity towards uneven growth derives from the unequal relationship between the local economy and the foreign sectors that drive it. Therefore, the fact that many of the transfers into the dependent economy are in the form of external supplies, primarily in the form of technology or capital, these inputs become concentrated into very specific sectors and economic growth in the periphery tends to follow a sectoral pattern as a result.

Given that the dependent economy is fragmented, gains generated in sectors characterized by large amounts of external inputs will not experience the customary spread effect to those less fortunate throughout society. Consequently, the advantages of having certain very productive sectors becomes irrelevant and the theory of trickle-down economics simply does not apply. As the process of production and distribution becomes increasingly concentrated within those productive sectors, the result is the creation of certain groups with special advantages and the vast majority of the remainder relegated to only marginal status. Political participation becomes equally fragmented and the prospect for the integration of those marginalized as a result of this process is correspondingly poor as democracy becomes limited to those individuals possessing the power and influence with which to exert it.

World Systems Theory, advocated by such individuals as Samir Amin and Samuel Wallerstein, takes a similar approach by emphasizing the global relationship between nations. Its proponents incorporate many of dependency theory's central themes directly into their philosophy such as the concepts of unequal trade, peripheral exploitation by the core, and the existence of a global interconnected economic system. Where world systems theory deviates from dependency theory is that it addresses the impasse of socialist development, is less economic in scope, and offers the possibility for certain nations to escape the periphery through an alternative path.

Essential to world systems theory is the notion of semi-peripheral nations, which are countries that can be distinguished from the remainder of the periphery through their increased capacity for industrial production. Examples include the Newly Industrialized Nations (NICs) of South-East Asia and perhaps Brazil in a Latin American context. Schuurman (1993) considered these nations as integral components of the entire system. They "act as a buffer between the core and the periphery...[and] function as a go-between: [the semi-periphery] imports hi-tech from the core, and in return exports semi-manufactured goods to the core. It imports raw materials from the periphery and exports to it industrial end-products (p.8)". It is in this regard that previously unthinkable alliances can be forged, such as between the United States and China, and represents an area where neo-Marxism is certainly devoid of offering any theoretical foundation for its justification.

Accordingly, world systems theory is able to confront one of the most difficult questions facing *dependenistas*: how to differentiate between external and internal factors in explaining underdevelopment. World systems theory concludes that, at a more abstract level, there are no longer external factors because the system exists as an

independent whole. From this perspective, capitalism is a global phenomenon. Therefore, "underdevelopment occurs because countries are subject to a trade regime and produce for a world market that is characterized by unequal trade (Schuurman, p.9)". Even though there is some debate over whether a capitalist mode of production has existed in Latin America over the past four centuries, proponents of world systems theory contend that the perpetuation of unequal trade practices has seriously undermined the region's ability to create and expand independent national markets and resulted in a displaced economic system for its nations. This, in turn, has serious political and social consequences because, as such, the system must be maintained through a conscious effort of suppression.

Germani (1981) supports this assertion by arguing that class conflict is essentially an international phenomenon derived by the relationship between industrialized Western powers and semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. Agreeing with Wallerstein, he concludes that with specific regard to the periphery "the primary contradiction is between the interests organized and located in the core countries and their local allies on the one hand and the majority of the population on the other" (p.91). He concludes that "an anti-imperialist nationalistic struggle is in fact a mode of expression of class-interest" (ibid, p.91). This expression of class-interest is primarily the result of years of economic influence and oppression emanating from the core through the control and fragmentation of peripheral economies.

Amin (1981) takes a similar position by suggesting that as a result of the internationalization of capitalism, and the fact that peripheral societies exist primarily to satisfy the requirements of the core, they increasingly tend to resemble one another in both form and structure. The distortions in productivity and prices prevents the

development of a national capitalist class and eliminates the prospect for independent agrarian wealth due to the periphery's association with 'ancillary commercial capital' that tends to dominate it. Those who have been fortunate enough to obtain and perpetuate this relationship within each individual nation expropriate any remaining surplus for themselves. This often results in societies where political participation is extremely fragmented as the majority are relegated to the margins and the concentration of political power and wealth becomes increasingly the domain of a very select few.

The conclusion is that in peripheral nations where the economic system is skewed and the vast majority are excluded from its benefits, economic marginalization also results in political marginalization. Subsequently, the state tends to operate devoid of true political democracy and participation because so many of their citizenry are excluded from the material gains of their economy. Therefore, the analysis of New Social Movements in Latin America is best articulated through world systems theory because the former is a direct expression of the consequences described by the latter. In this regard, by perceiving the world as a series of inter-related parts the issue of structural oppression can be seen more clearly. In addition, world systems theory tends to embrace a Leftist political/economic philosophy that many New Social Movements committed to the alleviation of structural oppression support. Given that the current system of liberal democratic capitalism is not in the best interests of the Latin American urban poor, the only alternative seems to be an evaluation and recommendations based upon a theory that categorically rejects it.

To that end, world systems theory provides a viable theoretical framework from which to operate. It maintains that international relations are dominated by a unitary economic system subdivided into three realms (core, semi-periphery, and periphery) and

that the political organization of the world system is even more fragmented consisting of an interstate system of sovereign nations competing amongst themselves. Since those nations comprising the core are obviously more powerful militarily and economically than those of the periphery, they exercise this advantage as a primary means of control. Stemming from this is the contention that social class relations are international in scope since capitalism itself is a world system and, therefore, its fundamental classes, capitalists and labourers, follow suit. Buechler (2000) argues that class analysis, from this perspective, extends beyond national boundaries and that it is increasingly evident that the capitalist class is an international contingent with no regard for those boundaries. The working class is also internationalist in scale with labour power being exploited on a global market, primarily through multinationals, even though labour itself remains extremely rigid and unable to cross those boundaries itself. As such, any organization focused upon a single nation state is insufficient because it plays into the capitalist strategy of divide and conquer by having one national group square off against another. It is, therefore, in the interest of the capitalist class to have these various insurgent groups not to recognize the importance of comprehending their struggle within the scope of an international perspective.

According to these same individuals, the current global system of capitalist hegemony has been in operation for approximately five centuries and although it is characterized by a small number of core countries dominating the remainder, occasionally a single nation will ascend to full hegemony and dominate all three realms simultaneously. Great Britain in the mid-nineteenth century and the United States shortly after the Second World War are two such examples. This ascension is led by growing economic power that results in a corresponding increased military capacity

while the reverse is the usually case once that nation begins to recede. The relative position of a state in relation to this cycle of hegemony has serious implications domestically. During generally prosperous periods, however brief, economic growth should diminish class conflict and encourage social reform. As the economic climate begins to deteriorate, political and economic inequality increases and the state becomes much more repressive as a beleaguered capitalist class attempts to maintain their privileged status. The state, in turn, tends to cut (or at least limit) expenditures that do fit this narrowly defined pro-capitalist logic affecting the standard of living for the remainder of the population.

This is the case in most peripheral societies since the window for growth has been characteristically small and is a primary reason behind the vast amount of protest in relation to the core. Most dissention generally manifests itself in the form of urban protest since the ramifications are most easily documented on that constituency. These protests may address certain discrepancies within a particular state or region, but nonetheless prove insufficient in addressing the root causes because they are restricted by the structural forces concentrated within the world system. In this sense, urban protest within the periphery becomes a microcosm of the inadequacies of the prevailing capitalist system for the majority while, at the same time, perpetuating its subsistence by focusing attention upon national solutions to global problems.

World systems theory offers a unique approach to the study of social movements due to its macro perspective and its attention to global structures. Too often, social movements are analyzed at the micro level because their influence and effectiveness upon local and regional authorities tends to accentuate their accomplishments while diminishing their limitations. Therefore, even when issues that seem specific to certain

peripheral societies arise, such as democratic legitimacy, it is important to bear in mind that they must be viewed within the context of a global network. Accordingly, Amin (1990) suggests that "the principle task of the social movement in the periphery of the system today is to impose the missing democratic dimension, not to substitute it for the national and social dimensions, but to strengthen them" (p.117). In this regard, the struggle for democracy and participation in one region of the periphery extends beyond the realm of a specific locale by taking into account the consequences of that transformation upon the global system.

Ray (1993) supports this line of reasoning by articulating a theory based upon Western European philosophy extended to underdeveloped nations through a focus upon 'global social movements' as the conveyers of alternative forms of modernity during periodic crises in global regulation which often affects the periphery just as dramatically as the core. He criticizes Habermas' strictly Eurocentric focus by arguing that "in an age of globalization of economic and political structures it is no longer appropriate to analyze social movements solely at the level of nationally defined space" (Ray, p.xvii). To this end, he focuses upon legitimation in the periphery. He suggests that those operating at the state level (the government) are largely responsible for the majority of the modernization process of a given peripheral nation as opposed to the Habermasian argument that this is generally the role of the national bourgeoisie. This can often create an environment where authoritarian regimes, and their successors, have come to rely upon clientelism and corruption during periods of crises in their own legitimacy. It is in this context that social movements arise to offer different alternatives for modernization (not in an economic sense but socially, politically, and culturally). Globalization provides them with the necessary tools with which to articulate these new values and

aspirations. This perspective is useful in the sense that it locates a given peripheral society within the context of the world capitalist system and determines that this is of critical importance in shaping the dynamics of social activism and collective organization within that society.

2.4 The Multilateral Approach to Poverty Alleviation

The OECD Poverty Strategy

The OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) was created in 1961 with the intention of fostering greater economic co-operation amongst member nations. Mexico has been a member since May 18th, 1994. The organization (1988) states that its member nations, "with their democratic political systems and market-based economies, succeeded in the decades after World War II in wedding economic efficiency and social progress" (p.8). This is in accordance with the organization's policy of promoting three specific objectives (p.2):

1. To achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in Member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus to contribute to the development of the world economy;
2. To contribute to sound economic expansion in Member as well as non-member countries in the process of economic development; and
3. To contribute to the expansion of world trade on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations.

It is with these ideals in mind that the organization pursues an agenda of economic expansion based primarily upon the liberalization of trade.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the OECD would argue that the economic crisis that struck Latin America in 1981 was largely the result of three factors. It seemed to recognize the international scope of the crisis by concluding that "the basic immediate cause of the severity and duration of Latin America's recent crisis [were] a protracted world recession, abnormally high international interest rates, and international bankers'

decisions to cut back lending sharply as of 1982. The first two at least, if not the third, came as a surprise to most analysts, and all three were certainly out of the region's control" (OECD LA 1986, p.45). The crisis had severe ramifications for the entire region. Mexico in particular experienced incredible bouts of hyper-inflation and an interest rate shock that dramatically increased its foreign debt.

Although the organization concluded that the effects of the crisis were being unduly borne by the periphery, it determined that the adjustment programmes from 1982 to 1984 were a necessary evil in order to avoid a further crisis by protecting the solvency of many financial institutions in the West. As a result, most these institutions were shielded at the expense of developing nations. It is with surprising candour that the OECD admitted as much in 1986 in the following statement- It is "difficult to avoid the conclusion that the benefits of these series of debt renegotiation and adjustment programmes (certainly in terms of what was avoided) accrued largely to the centre, whereas the costs fell exclusively on the debtor nations" (OECD LA 1986, p.46).

The adjustment programmes and renegotiations had a serious affect upon these nations. Although every segment of society was affected in some manner, those least equipped to deal with it, the rural and urban poor, were most adversely. It is estimated that in Mexico alone nearly twenty percent of the population were living in conditions of extreme poverty in 1984 (OECD Mexico 1991/92, p.112) thousands of others were characterized as being moderately poor. The OECD defines extreme poverty as a situation where individuals are unable to acquire sufficient nutrition to function adequately in the labour force. Even PRONASOL, a government programme designed to reduce extreme poverty with figures regarded as generally conservative, estimated that over twenty percent of the population were living in conditions of extreme poverty

by the late eighties (ibid, p.112). While moderate poverty is relative to the society within which it persists, and usually a subject for contentious debate, extreme poverty is absolute and therefore, much easier to define. Although the majority of the population in this classification were peasants, the numbers of urban poor were consistently increasingly. A situation that was relatively new to the Mexican experience. For the first time in memory, conditions of extreme poverty were becoming a noticeable reality within the streets of most major centres in Mexico and were no longer being relegated to the extremities of those cities and the rural populations.

The OECD generally associates urban poverty with an expanding informal sector rather than with a lack of access to traditional employment. In 1995 it concluded that,

> "as labour force growth started overtaking job creation in the formal sector, many workers with no (or little) schooling found employment and a source of subsistence in informal activities, characterized by low productivity, instable terms of employment, and a scarce coverage by most labour and social security legislation provisions" (OECD Mexico 1995, p.104).

Therefore, its strategy for combating poverty is to eliminate (or seriously impede) the expansion of the informal sector. To this end, it recommends that in addition to creating new employment opportunities within the formal sector, primarily through increased access to education, "potential poverty-reducing effects in urban areas could be achieved by policies that deregulate formal-sector activities, hence increasing the demand for labour (or wages) in microenterprises" (ibid, p.104). This highly contentious approach remains either unimplemented or insufficient considering that by virtually all accounts the informal sector continues to expand annually.

The IADB Poverty Strategy

The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) believes economic growth is a key element for poverty reduction but that as long as current levels of inequality persist,

poverty reduction will remain a slow process. According to the Bank, Latin America continues to suffer from one of the most unequal income distributions in the world, a distinction that has remained unchanged for several decades. By their accounts, it would take some countries roughly sixty years, and other more than two centuries in order to eradicate extreme poverty with an annual growth rate of three percent per capita. In contrast, the value of the transfers needed to eradicate extreme poverty immediately is not that great: most of the countries in the region, given perfect targeting, would take between 0.5 percent and 1 percent of GDP to directly provide the poor with transfers sufficient to raise them out of poverty (IADB, 3/98). The issue from this perspective, is thus, not necessarily the availability of resources, except for a few of the poorest countries in the region, but rather the political will, supported by technically sound policies and programmes, to aggressively combat poverty.

While recent trends in economic growth have been for the most part positive, the IADB believes there have been troubling patterns of inequality. In most Latin American nations the wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers has dramatically increased. Contrary to expectations, there has not been an increased demand, in relative terms, for unskilled labour. Various explanations have been given for this phenomenon, including: regulations which restrict labour mobility; technological change which increase the relative demand for skilled labour; and trade liberalization in the context of economic globalization, in which the countries of the region have to compete with other countries around the globe, such as China, where labour costs are even lower. It is the position of the IADB that poverty is fundamentally linked to lack of access, by control or ownership, to productive and financial assets (IADB, 3/98). Therefore, the Bank promotes policies it believes will increase access to assets including initiatives such as

land reform, increased inheritance taxes, privatizations that distribute shares amongst the general population, and housing and credit programmes designed to target disadvantaged families.

In addition to these initiatives, actions which increase the access to market opportunities for the poor also comprise an important element of their poverty reduction platform. The Bank contends that it is essential to correct failures in the credit market, eliminate discriminatory practices in the labour market and the judicial system, reduce restrictions to labour mobility, and guarantee title of property for the poor. Also important are actions to improve the quality of life for low-income groups such as providing access to clean water and adequate sanitation. Another element of fundamental importance to any poverty reduction strategy is the inclusion of mechanisms to help the poor withstand the adverse shocks of future economic crises or natural disasters. Despite the fact that these events occur quite frequently, and that the poor are generally disproportionately affected, government responses are, more often than not, improvised and ad-hoc contributing to additional complications after the initial crisis has passed.

The IADB suggests that the most compelling task these nations face is significantly reducing the unacceptably high levels of poverty founded, in large measure, upon an unequal distribution of income and assets (IADB, 4/98). The Bank admits that their direct knowledge about the social conditions of the poor is woefully lacking and the practices and policies recommended are often untested. In addition, in the pursuit of policies to combat poverty, the Bank believes it has learned from experience that often the process of project design, preparation, and implementation is as important as the results. Therefore, greater community participation, effective dialogue between all

sectors of society, and more open and transparent processes are essential to sustaining development in their opinion.

In the search for an effective means to alleviate poverty, the Bank endeavours to sharpen the focus of its lending. In the mid seventies, agriculture and urban development were the primary benefactors of its policies; during the eighties, the Bank focused upon the financing gap created by the debt crisis; and in the nineties, it emphasized the economic reform of its borrowing members. Today, the Bank maintains that it has a greater focus on poverty reduction than at any time in its history. It underscores that social sector lending is at an all-time high, that their range of initiatives aimed at poverty reduction is expanding, and that the Bank has created mechanisms to advance the concerns of women, children, indigenous groups, and other minorities in its lending practices (IADB, 4/98).

Historically, the distribution of income in Latin America has always been extremely unequal, implying that the rate of poverty has been far greater than would be expected given per capita income. The Bank suggests that the debt crisis of the eighties exacerbated this situation. Incomes decreased dramatically, inequality increased accordingly, the number of people living in poverty rose by at least forty million or twenty-two percent during the decade, and the urban poor were hit the hardest by falling living standards as the urban poverty rate rose by almost thirty million, accounting for nearly seventy percent of the total increase (IADB, 3/97). The Bank, along with the OECD, believes that the poverty rate reflects the overall macro economic conditions, and those nations that adjusted early and then recovered, such as Costa Rica and Colombia, managed to reduce their rate considerably over the decade. The fact that Mexico adjusted almost simultaneously with these nations and did not experience

similar improvements or that Colombia soon receded back to initial levels is curiously omitted. Therefore, from an income perspective, the basic strategy of the Bank for eliminating poverty is to assist the poor in earning their way out. Consequently, the economy has to expand the number of jobs available to the poor and increase their productivity or earning power in the process. The majority of these occupations will have to be created in the private sector since the IADB believes strongly that the role of government is to choose policies which will entice the private sector to create higher paying occupations for the poor but not to directly intervene in the process themselves (IADB, 3/97).

That being said, the Bank does believe that governments have certain responsibilities to their constituents. In addition to providing a minimum safety net for the least fortunate, they can directly supply many of the basic necessities that define a minimum standard of living. Even when the private sector is unable to create enough of the necessary employment to reduce the level of poverty as measured by income, the government can guarantee basic education and access to health services. It can also build safe water and sanitation systems and guarantee public safety in poor neighbourhoods. In short, the IADB argues the government, through the provision of public goods, can directly improve the living conditions of the poor and that this could go a long way toward reducing the social tension that results when a market economy fails to adequately increase their income (IADB, 3/97). In an ideal situation, urban protest would be eliminated and the need for New Social Movements irrelevant because governments would provide the basic necessities when the market readjusts. The Bank believes policies to ensure this does not occur, or at least not dramatically, are in the best

interests of the poor because a healthy market economy creates wealth, and therefore, employment opportunities for the most disadvantaged sectors of the population.

2.5 The Impact of Liberation Theology in Latin America

Despite various theories that often emphasize the reluctance of the urban poor in Latin America to mobilize collectively, those who do not share this position tend to stress the intimate relationship many New Social Movements have fostered with the Catholic church over the past thirty years as an important consequence of their influence. Certain authors (Berryman, Sigmund, and others) even conclude that the Church may have contributed more to the radicalization and motivation of the urban poor to remonstrate against their living conditions than any other source in the region. This notion is contrary to the inclination to view New Social Movements as spontaneous, reactionary entities that are initially created ad hoc and seem to follow no common plan and obey no central authority. Behind this perceived 'spontaneity' is usually the arduous labour of organizing and mobilizing small groups of people that are primarily interested in only coping with the hardships of their daily lives. Evers (1985) argues that "if there was any centralizing organization behind this [process], it was the Catholic church, in its progressive parts, that lent its roof to many of these initiatives" (Evers, p.46). Therefore, although the Church has often been perceived as traditionally conservative, it has become a rallying point, and perhaps one of the few relatively safe rallying points available, against many of the worst excesses of local governments and elites. It has been a visible leader in organizing protests against human rights abuses and government corruption and has been one of the most committed authorities to social organization and public education over the past three decades.

An important consequence of this increased clerical interest in social and political issues was the growth and evolution of Liberation Theology. This ideology has had a significant impact upon the region that far outweighs its religious connotations and should be of particular interest to political scientists and sociologists for a number of reasons, ranging from its generally Leftist political orientation to questions surrounding its hierarchical nature. It is especially relevant to this inquiry because as Drogus (1995) suggests,

> "The liberationist church and particularly the CEBs (Church Base Communities) can be seen as a religio-political social movement. They therefore offer a unique perspective on the study of social movements more generally. Understanding and explaining the liberationist church's rise, fall, and uneven impact in the region are the first steps in assessing its significance for the fields of religion and politics and social movements" (Drogus, p.465-466).

Gayarre (1993) agrees with Ellacuria's argument that the impetus behind the creation of Liberation Theology was the poverty most Latin Americans were experiencing as a result of the structural injustice of the current global system. She concluded that,

> "TL (Liberation Theology) starts from the observation that the majority of the population of Latin America lives in misery/poverty and in a climate of social/political oppression, as a result of historical and structural injustice. TL asks what the Christian faith says about causes and solutions and what should be done from that faith, through the workings of a liberation movement, to help oppressed nations become free nations; since those responsible for this injustice are peoples-nations-empires, it is necessary to introduce the correct economic and political dynamics" (Gayarre, p.38).

Therefore, the preponderance of urban protest and the emergence of a variety of New Social Movements in the region demonstrate the imperativeness to include the influence of Liberation Theology into the context of these specific issues.

First, a bit of history. Shortly after the Second World War, there were a number of political and religious trends that occurred in Latin America that converged during the initial phase of 'development' and culminated in the Conference of Bishops at Medellin,

Colombia in 1968 resulting in the acknowledgment of Liberation Theology as a viable reaction against poverty by many of those attending. Most notably, governments in the region were becoming much more overtly oppressive. Regardless of the particular political perspective or the history of totalitarianism and oppression that often characterizes the majority of Latin American nations, most governments consolidated their power and intensified their efforts during this time resulting in unprecedented levels of authority for ruling families, parties, and classes. Many of those affected recognized that this was being accomplished to a large extent with the direct assistance from the United States and the West. This coincided with the ever increasing number of economic hardships the vast majority of the remainder of the population were facing as a result of failed, primarily state motivated, initiatives that were capitalistic in nature but had not trickled down throughout society as initially predicted.

In this regard, the influence of the Cuban Revolution cannot be underscored. It presented an alternative path which placed the needs of the majority at the centre of the development process and recognized the perils of foreign economic control. As one Latin American nation after another experienced a wave of nationalism and public unrest immediately following the revolution, the ranking Catholic authorities were faced with a dilemma. It was evident that the Church was becoming increasingly isolated from the corridors of power under many of the current regimes. Even though it continued to maintain a significant amount of reverence among the general public, the internationalization of capital and investment was relegating it to the periphery of state influence. In addition, the source of its authority rested in the conviction of the people who were most deeply affected by the current economic reality and totalitarian nature of many of those regimes. Therefore, by embracing an ideology which emphasized the

importance of social justice through Catholic theology and a focus on scripture, the bishops appealed to the very constituency of their greatest support while alerting regional authorities that the Church still maintained a significant amount of support at the grassroots level.

The conclusions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which articulated the Church's support of democracy, human rights, and social justice for the first time, served as the institutional justification necessary for many in the region to pursue this alternative path. It provided the encouragement for clergy to attempt less authoritative and hierarchical means of participation and laid the groundwork for the eventual creation of Church Base Communities (CEBs). The bishops involved denounced institutionalized violence and advocated a 'consciousness-raising evangelization' in accordance with many of the teachings of Paolo Freire. This was taken a step further by Latin American bishops in 1968 when they emphasized lay participation in addition to the proclamations of the Council. They called for Christians to be involved in the transformation of society and committed the Church to share in the experiences of the poor out of a sense of solidarity. This provided the impetus for clergy and congregations alike to actively commit to altering the political and social landscape of Latin American society from below, not above, as had been traditionally the case.

Most scholars consider the Medellin Conference as the genesis of 'Liberation Theology' in Latin America and the point from which the Catholic Church began to deviate from being the most reliable bastion of support for the status quo to one of its most vociferous critics. The conference consisted of over one-hundred and thirty bishops, representing more than six-hundred parishes, who convened with the task of applying the proclamations of Vatican II to Latin America. It is important to bear in

mind that Medellin was not a flashpoint, where Liberation Theology suddenly burst upon the scene from some theological vacuum. It was the result of at least a decade of transformations and hardships within Latin America and the Church itself. For this reason there are those, articulated by Levine and others, who argue that it represents the culmination and apex of Liberation Theology rather than its beginning.

Despite this disagreement, the fact that there even was a conference proves that it was not isolated from larger Church structures or the reality of the Latin American hierarchy. It was merely a singular event, albeit an important one, that occurred during the progression of Liberation Theology over the past fifty years. Drogus (1995) believes that the significance of the conference "lay in a radical Christian emphasis on social and economic rights and in a commitment to mobilizing the poor to struggle for their own liberation" (p.465). MacNabb and Rees (1993) offer a similar claim by arguing that the bishops at Medellin concluded "that the Church in Latin America was living in a 'situation of sin' because of the economic condition of most people, and that the Church would have to break its ties with the traditional structures of society and support the transfer of power to the masses" (p.725). Therefore, Medellin represents a significant event in the history and development of Latin America in general and should not be judged simply according to its sociological impact upon the Catholic Church, in religious terms, or as an event that occurred outside the parameters of authority within the region.

Of equal importance to the evolution of Liberation Theology was the translation and publication of Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation* in 1973. It evoked a very strong reaction from all segments of society, Latin American and internationally alike, and most concede that it is primarily responsible for giving the movement its

name. Gutierrez relied heavily upon the fourth chapter of St. Luke as the foundation for his Christian theory of liberation. In it, Christ announces his mission by reading from the prophet Isaiah- "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel of the poor...to bid prisoners to go free...to liberate those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, a day of retribution"(Luke 4:18-21). *A Theology of Liberation* signifies an important moment because it marks the instance when Liberation Theology was brought out of the Seminaries and shantytowns of Latin America and into the broader consciousness of the region and globe through its publication.

Gutierrez distinguished between three levels of liberation that would serve as the cornerstone for future reference. Gayarre (1993) described the three levels in the following terms,

> "the first level is the historical liberation of peoples, classes, races, and cultures that suffer oppression and injustice on the economic, social, political, educational, and cultural fronts. The second speaks of the same liberation, but at a more profound level of man as man, with ethical implications that this anthropological approach involves. The third level, the theological, is still more profound and subsists in the light of faith in Christ, revealing sin as the root of human oppression at all levels and total liberation as redemption from sin, with all its historical, social, and material consequences" (Gayarre, p.39).

These three levels can be defined as the combination of a socio-analytical analysis of a specific situation with a global interpretation of political economics and history in accordance with the Christian faith. From this, derived one of the central tenets of Liberation Theology- 'Ver, Pensar, Obrar' (See, Think, Act). Gayarre describes this as recognizing "the situation of poverty and oppression, judging the present situation of poverty in light of the Bible, and the commitment to existing social organizations, cooperatives, and revolutionary action" (p.40).

Following Medellin, Liberation Theology came under attack by many in the region and the West as overtly Marxist and more of a political strategy masked in Theolocism than a Christian theory of liberation from poverty. A decade of attacks culminated in another conference at Pueblo, Mexico in 1979 where many bishops reversed their prior position and actively condemned Liberation Theology for becoming too secular, primarily due to its relationship with Marxism and the atheism often associated with it. Proponents argued that it was Christian theology of the oppressed, not for the oppressed as Marxism is typically understood, while others defended the relationship by maintaining that a capitalistic social analysis implies a materialistic, individually centred perception of society that is equally contradictory to Christian values and attitudes. The result was an even more ambiguous position than before. MacNabb and Rees conclude that,

> "the bishops could not deny that the economic and political situation of the poor in Latin America had gotten worse. However, the Conference ignored the concept of class struggle even though the bishops recognized that poverty is the 'product of economic, social, and political structures and situations'... When the time came for the bishops to offer solutions, they avoided talk of class and oppression and focused on the dangers of secularization- they wanted to separate religion from political and social problems" (MacNabb and Rees, p.728).

The creation of Church Base Communities (CEBs) was endorsed as long as they were under the tutelage of a priest. In other words, the aim was to replace the grassroots focus of Liberation Theology with a conventional hierarchy the Catholic Church was more accustomed to.

Eventually a compromise of sorts was reached at Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic in 1992 where the value of CEBs was recognized but the bishops concluded that they should not be too politically oriented or function independently of parish structures. This became the official position of the Latin American Church, primarily at

the insistence of the Vatican, despite the contention of most regional bishops that an important element of pastoral work involves promoting the social participation of the state. This is exemplified by a declaration from the Bolivian Conference of Bishops that Latin American poverty "did not come about by itself...but is the product of the current free market system, which lacks any controls, and the economic adjustments that are part of neoliberal policies that do not take into account the social dimension" (Chomsky, p.148). These are important developments because they demonstrate the diversity of opinion amongst clergy and laity alike as to the role of Liberation Theology which cannot be summed up by official Church documents. The reality of the situation is often much more radical than conference documents and Papal encyclicals may lead one to believe. What must be emphasized is that where Liberation Theology is concerned, especially with regard to CEBs, there is a wide range of opinions that not only differ from the official position of Latin American bishops and the Church but also between certain dioceses and their members.

Gayarre (1993) suggests that Liberation Theology is a direct challenge to the hegemony of liberal democratic capitalism because it operates according to principles that are contrary to one of its firmest premises, "that it can respond in a scientific way, through the free market, to the needs of the population" (p.36). Accordingly, its commitment to social and political movements dedicated to the liberation of the masses from all types of oppression became a primary focus. The realization that true liberation cannot be attained through theology or social movements alone resulted in a combination of the two that implied "the rejection of all forms of capitalism, mainly responsible for the situation in which the majority of the population live [and the] championing of those social movements that do the most work in favour of the poor and

the popular majorities and that aim to make such majorities become more active political and social subjects" (ibid. p.40).

This implies a relationship between Liberation Theology on the one hand with social and political movements on the other that "provides different modes for reconciling the autonomy of faith with the need to effectively promote justice and liberation" (Gayarre, p.40). She articulated three such modes (ibid. p.40). The first is the 'substitution or denial' mode which assumes that whatever is really important about the objectives of [Liberation Theology] is social, economic, and political liberation, and that all preaching and construction of the Kingdom of God is directed toward that liberation. The 'serve and support' mode reaffirms the autonomy of faith, and endeavours to ensure that the faith is stimulated and reinforced, but does everything possible to be of service to the revolutionary models, and genuinely to the socialist process. It considers the promotion of the struggle for justice to be one of the cornerstones of the faith and that this is carried over to the practical plane through opting for some political or social movement, which it helps religiously and politically and in the face of which it exercises the critical element contained in faith. The 'social collaboration' mode argues that the specific element of the faith and the Church is not the promotion of the political and technical aspects in themselves as being necessary for the coming of the kingdom of God in history, but rather in so far as they favour or hinder the proclamation of the kingdom of God. Liberation, which Christian salvation looks for in the individual, has as its goal the transformation into the 'new being' so that Christ might be the principle of life; political liberation has much to contribute to this, just as man liberated through Christianity can do much for social revolution or change. In this

respect, Liberation Theology should be directed towards the social environment rather than the realm of international and state politics.

Therefore, given this economic and social reality, Amin (1990) concludes that the intimate link between Liberation Theology and the failure of peripheral capitalism is completely natural. He asserts that "movements making 'ethnic' demands, including national, paranational, or religious... are largely the product of the failure to build a national state in the periphery of the capitalist system" (p.133). Furthermore, this directly relates to Liberation Theology because he determined that,

> "at the present time, in some regions of the Christian third world (principally in Latin America), Christianity has perhaps begun another cultural revolution, in response to the demands of national liberation envisaged in a potentially socialist popular perspective. Liberation theology, which expresses this reinterpretation, is thus not in conflict with the popular national revolution but on the contrary a support for it" (ibid. p.132).

By this standard, separating Liberation Theology from popular revolution, or even protest, in Latin America would be to neglect the very essence of the nature behind that remonstration as secular issues (economics, politics, and the like) are often articulated through their relationship with those most intimately connected to the poor. Liberation Theology is an expression of that relationship.

Perhaps nowhere is Liberation Theology perceived as a greater threat to the status quo of liberal democratic capitalism than through its relationship with many revolutionary and Marxist movements throughout Latin America. As was previously discussed, there is a natural tendency for its proponents to embrace a measure of Marxist thought given that it provides a political economic perspective to the evils of capitalism. In addition, every nation in the region has vast experiences with the consequences of capitalism and only limited exposure to actual socialism. This made many receptive to

incorporating socialism into their theoretical praxis rather than attempting another modified version of capitalism which has obviously had disastrous results in the past. An inherent component of Liberation Theology involves the incorporation of that element of Marxist thought which endeavours to explain the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation and offer a method of transcending it based upon scientific theory. From this derived a revolutionary praxis through a Christian perspective incorporating the direct experiences of Latin American nations into the Marxist theory of political economy. Therefore, Liberation Theology, and any subsequent movements inspired by it, are not principally pro-Marxist but rather pro-Christian and anti-capitalist. Marxism serves as a pivotal component only so far as is necessary for it to provide an explanation for the perils of capitalist exploitation.

Given the nature of this relationship, one can come to the following conclusions. That Liberation Theology approves of and supports the genuinely revolutionary Marxist movements, above all when they are concerned with denouncing the oppression of the capitalist system. At the same time, it distinguishes itself from Marxist policies, since its primary focus is the reinforcement of the faith in the popular masses. It also endeavours to strengthen the contribution of the Christian faith to social change without subordinating such faith to any political authority. Therefore, it looks to promote social and political movements in the service of the popular classes, without subordinating that service to the institutional consolidation of such movements. In this respect, Liberation Theology concentrates on the theoretical component of Marxism by applying its scientific analysis to primarily economic issues that affect Latin America. Accordingly, it can be at once supportive and critical of popular movements by promoting those values which are in accordance with its Christian ideology and anti-capitalist nature

while, at the same time, condemning the atheistic features of Marxist thought and other aspects that do not correspond directly to its values.

Therefore, bearing in mind that its principle motivation has always been theological, there are many distinct characteristics that distinguish Liberation Theology from traditional Catholicism. Sigmund (1990) considers seven as universally applicable throughout the region. The first is a radical break with the traditional way of doing theology that will result in a theology based upon a combination of theory and practice (praxis) rather than the formal, systematic, organized means of study as in the past. The second, and most important, is that the focus of this theology is the poor. Theologians must be committed and work directly with the poor if they wish to truly practice Liberation Theology. Although this theology must be directly related to the Word of the Bible, it must always be in relation to the experiences of the poor. Proponents conclude that what the poor experience in Latin America is oppression. Therefore, theologians must concern themselves with liberation, which is removing the root causes of that oppression. Liberation theologians argue that theology should make use of the 'social sciences' in their attempt to analyze the causes of oppression. This has usually meant involving a Marxist method of analysis as most liberation theologians initially embraced the dependency school and argued that dependent capitalism is the principle cause behind that oppression. Therefore, the Church should be committed to the liberation of the poor from dependent capitalism and advocate some measure of socialism. In time, many accepted that capitalism was not the only obstacle to liberation. They argued that problem of liberation involved psychological, ethnic, racial, and gender factors in addition to economic conditions. Accordingly, most derived a willingness to consider other types of oppression as independent variables within the larger structure. Church

Base Communities (CEBs) were recognized at the early stages of the movement as pivotal instruments through which to promote the fundamental principles of Liberation Theology. As such, they were incorporated almost immediately into its message. These CEBs became an important force in the struggle for social change and provided a measure of grassroots populism to the movement which advocated among the poor an awareness of their spiritual and material problems, and the possibilities of taking collective action in order to remedy them. This worked well within the context of anti-capitalist structuralism which was inherent to almost all early Liberation Theology perspectives and texts. In addition to these characteristics, there are two main strategies associated with Liberation Theology. The first is scripture interpretation through an informed dialogue with Marxism that analyzes poverty, class differentiation, and conflict. The second is an understanding of where change is required and a plan to administer it through clerical action. Therefore, the derivatives of these strategies are interpretation and social action.

There has already been a great deal of discussion around the concept of CEBs and their role within Liberation Theology. As early as Medellin, many documents spoke of their contribution even though only a relatively small number actually existed at the time. The significant role CEBs have subsequently played in the promotion and evolution of Liberation Theology demands they be analyzed almost as a New Social Movement onto themselves. A large number of scholars contend that CEBs may be the most important component of Liberation Theology in Latin America, without which the entire notion could not have attained popular credibility or notoriety. This is constantly reiterated by individuals such as Berryman (1987) who argue that "although they are not the creation of liberation theology, the base communities are a primary embodiment of

liberation theology" (p.63). They are integral to any discussion of New Social Movements in Latin America because as Drogus (1995) suggests, "the liberationist church's impact on individuals might build new collective identities and mobilize constituencies for popular movements, the popular Church (CEBs) came to be seen as a manifestation of Latin America's diverse new social movements" (p.467).

Bolstering this claim is the estimation that by the late eighties, more than four-million members participated in over one hundred-thousand CEBs in Brazil alone (Sigmund, p.25). Given that the numbers obviously fluctuate throughout the region, it must be emphasized that much of the writing on CEBs is relatively general and abstract since their nature, and the nature of the Church itself, vary a great deal between nations. This can often result in a misrepresented homogeneality that attempts to encompass all CEBs into one broad generalization. It is safe to say that, although CEBs can be found throughout the region, Brazil accounts for the greatest number in one nation and their impact on that country has been studied most acutely. This should not cloud the fact that CEBs are particularly active in every Latin American nation and often the only differences between them are that of scale.

Levine and Mainwaring (1989) assert that despite the broad interest in CEBs, there is surprisingly limited agreement on exactly what constitutes one. Therefore, substantially different organizations are often characterized within the same context. What may pass for a CEB in Central America can bear little resemblance to one in Colombia or Brazil. In addition, there are others who meet the general criteria for being considered a CEB, that nonetheless, for a variety of reasons, refuse to be characterized in that fashion. This is usually out of a fear of government reprisals or community condemnation due to their often implicit connection with socialism.

A CEB is most easily identified through the three basic elements of its name- Church Base Community. Therefore, any organization that stresses the ecclesiastical (a demonstrable link with the Church), is striving for a sense of community (small, homogeneous), and constitutes a base (either the masses at the base of the Church hierarchy or the poor at the base of the social pyramid) in Latin America could be considered a CEB. They are usually small groups of poor and marginalized people, involving less than thirty individuals, that are relatively homogeneous in social composition, who gather to read the Bible and discuss scripture within their local neighbourhood or hamlet.

As previously discussed, they are rarely spontaneous creations and are more likely to have been the result of initiatives by bishops, priests, and nuns who maintain their link with the Church through regular visits, the administration of courses, and by offering instructional material and advice. All of this means that CEBs are rarely distinct entities, autonomous from the Church, and are usually subject to its direct monitoring and control. This can often lead to open conflict when a CEB decides to embrace a position that is contrary to that of the clergy and is the primary reason why the Church attempts to maintain as much influence as possible over their affairs.

Despite the fact that the initial impetus behind the creation of most CEBs was primarily religious, not political, it is important to bear in mind that in almost every instance where CEBs became prominent "political closure was decisive in magnifying their impact as [they] became the only available vehicles for popular organization" (Levine and Mainwaring, p.211). Furthermore, throughout the seventies, as political repression intensified, normal existing channels were closed as any type of autonomous organization became suspicious in the eyes of local elites. The traditional sources of

alternative ideology and popular opposition such as political parties, trade unions, and neighbourhood organizations were systematically eliminated or stifled to the point where, in many instances, "church-sponsored groups and activities inadvertently became the only available political outlets in some countries" (ibid. p.211). This coincided with an increased radicalization of many clergy as a result of the repression, who, on many occasions, intensified their efforts to create and extend the influence of new and existing CEBs. The intense repression of any type of social organization coupled with the immense internal unpopularity of every existing military regime unwittingly gave credence to the virtues of Liberation Theology by politicizing the only autonomous source of its message.

That being said, the very fact that their primary focus tends to be religious can often result in conflicts between those who favour taking advantage of the forum to push their personal agenda towards collective social action and those who view them as a means to fill the liturgical void in a community first, and operate as a grassroots social movement second. As a result, Levine and Mainwaring conclude that "the clash of popular desires for liturgy with activist stress on 'useful' collective action is a permanent feature of much CEB life" (p.213). But this should not discredit the social consciousness and organizational potential of even the least active CEBs "because the normal practice of CEBs encourages critical discourse, egalitarianism, and experiments in self-governance within groups, even the most 'apolitical' CEBs can have long-term political consequences. They do so by stimulating and legitimating new kinds of leadership and commitment in the larger society" (ibid. p.214). Therefore, simply through their transformation of religious ceremony and the fact that many CEBs provided a completely unique form of Catholic discourse (scriptures in the vernacular,

group discussion, and laity managed Biblical studies) contributed to their revolutionary appeal and altered the very societies within which they existed regardless how overt their individual political or social agendas may have been.

But is that a sufficient means to address the structural issues most proponents of Liberation Theology endeavour to change? The argument that the liberationist church has failed to reach its potential through progressive attempts by the Vatican and a conservative element within Latin America to mainstream its message is a provocative one and, for the most part, accurate. It is fairly obvious in the region, at least at the institutional level, that over the past two decades there has been a concerted effort to move Catholics away from the radical, or liberationist, element within their religion. But what is usually omitted is that the onus should be squarely placed upon the shoulders of various clergy and congregations to encourage that change from below. In this respect, the argument that the liberationist church has tended to focus upon community rather than class-based issues is well taken. The lack of a class-based political vision has critically impeded any collective attempt at organization and rendered most clergy to the whim of their national authorities. Thus, it is perhaps the 'popular church's' failure to escape the hierarchical nature of Catholicism that has most seriously undermined its effort to adequately address the structural oppression it so vehemently opposes.

Despite this reality, and an apparent retrenchment of the liberationist element within Latin American Catholicism, there are still those who believe that it provides a sufficient recourse against structural oppression. Certain scholars argue that a continuing clash between core and peripheral churches will result in an increased radicalization of the periphery, represented most acutely in Latin America, due to three

regional factors: the fact that most practicing Catholics are poor; the continuing effect of the debt crisis; and increased competition from evangelical Protestants. The argument that these peripheral issues will create the conditions conducive to produce a wedge between the core and peripheral churches has so far not materialized, and it is doubtful it ever will. If the social realities of the eighties and nineties resulted in a retrenchment of the liberationist element, then is seems highly unlikely that the issues of today will provoke a different reaction as long as community identity continues to placed ahead of class. As has been proven time and again, structural issues will never be adequately addressed at the community level regardless if the apparatus exist beyond that realm. In the case of Liberation Theology, a regional apparatus is clearly visible but the focus continues to be communal.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Initially, a theoretical framework through which the various issues surrounding new social movements has been discussed in an attempt to arrive at some sort of conclusion about their composition and organization. As is the case with most abstract topics, there are always going to be a variety of opinions and perspectives but, in the end, one must accept certain parameters for a constructive assessment to occur. This is not without its problems. As has become obvious, social movements specifically, and political activism in general, are not homogeneous in nature and rarely subscribe to universally accepted definitions. Therefore, it is important to initially define what exactly constitutes a movement, as opposed to more general acts of protest and remonstration. A social movement should be considered 'an organization of a group of people leading to the production of a qualitatively new effect on the existing social structures'. At the practical level, this will result in a change in the balance of forces in

a direction counter to institutionalized social domination, the most obvious of which is a substantial change in the system of authority, generally seen in the reorganization of the political-legal apparatus, or in the organization of counter-domination, such as the strengthening of specific groups or classes. In this sense, organizations and groups who's primary concern are the provision of certain basic services should not be considered social movements because they do not address these matters directly.

Accordingly, new social movements should be characterized as "movements organized around issues of culture, identity, life-style, or place that typically lack a centring theoretical principle and can generally only be understood in relation to the particular societies, histories, cultures, and political and economic systems within which they take shape. As such, these movements are generally organized around grievances and identities that are distinct from the workplace and process of production" (Smith, 1991). This does not mean that these movements cannot be global in scope but simply that they usually occur as a reaction to a set of circumstances that manifest themselves most obviously at the local or national level.

Therefore, New Social Movements should be considered according to a world systems perspective because it seems to offer the ideal discourse to articulate the structural conditions that contribute to urban poverty in Latin America. The conclusion of Ray (1993) that "in an age of globalization of economic and political structures it is no longer appropriate to analyze social movements solely at the level of nationally defined space" (p.xvii) is well taken. In addition, world systems theory offers an ideal dichotomy to the prevailing neo-liberal policies embraced by most Latin American governments and also complements the socio-analysis of liberation theology, which had

a tremendous impact upon the majority of new social movements in the region despite its obvious shortcomings.

3. New Social Movements and Structural Change: Examples from Mexico and Brazil

3.1 The Political, Social, and Economic Realities of Mexico

If the prospects for New Social Movements in Latin America have been pessimistic at best, the debt crisis of the early eighties and fiscal austerity measures that followed should have provided the necessary impetus for collective mass mobilization. A series of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and renegotiations were implemented throughout the region as creditors attempted to recover their losses. What made most Latin American SAPs and renegotiations distinct from many others around the globe was the speed and severity with which they were introduced, at the insistence of multilateral agencies and banks, and the extended longevity of their duration. The bulk of these programmes were designed in the interests of the West as much as they were for each individual nation. As a result, local governments in the region adopted a series of neo-liberal reforms under tremendous external pressure aimed at addressing their international debt. This is important to bear in mind since, as Slater (1985) reminds us, "the nature of state-society relations, the origin and character of the dominant political discourses, the forms of insertion into the world capitalist economy and the variegated composition of social forces all obviously mould the potentiality and range of political effectiveness of [New Social Movements]" (p.11). According to almost every indicator, the poor and middle classes bore the brunt of these austerity measures.

In Mexico, the debt crisis and resulting austerity measures had a disastrous affect. Between 1983 and 1988, the minimum wage fell by more than ten per cent and by 1990, it had fallen a further eight per cent (Lustig, p. 337). During the decade of the eighties, Mexico City alone lost over a quarter of its manufacturing jobs and the minimum wage was reduced by nearly one-half (Gilbert, 194). Unemployment rose substantially in virtually every province (with the exception of a few maquiladora

regions in the north) and almost all government subsidies were removed or drastically reduced. Twenty per cent of the economically active population in the nation was unemployed during the heaviest years of the crisis. These figures do not even take into account the sprawling informal sector that grew rapidly throughout the decade, incorporating thousands of under and unemployed, most of which lived in relative to extreme poverty. By 1993, fifty-six per cent of the employed population worked outside the formal economy in some manner (Shefner, 1999).

This economic meltdown coincided with a dramatic retrenchment in social service expenditures that are symbolic of SAPs. From 1980 to 1992, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party that governed Mexico for over seventy years) reduced the funding for education from 18 to 13.9 per cent; health from 2.4 to 1.9 per cent; and housing, social services, and welfare from 18.5 to 13 per cent (as a percentage of total central government expenditures; Shefner, 1999). Although these measures affected virtually every segment of society, the poor became increasingly impoverished and less likely to find work and the middle class had their mobility and access to credit seriously restricted when the government became no longer a viable employer and rampant inflation continued unabated. In addition, the trend towards urbanization that began in earnest during the seventies was accelerated during the eighties contributing to severe congestion as city planners and local governments were unable to keep pace with the rapidly increasing population. As a result, Mexico City became notorious as one of the most polluted on earth.

While there are obvious distinctions between rural, agrarian based movements and those located within an urban landscape, it appears necessary to address the impetus behind such a deliberate relocation that may initially seem irrational. One of the results

of this relocation is that urban New Social Movements are becoming increasingly significant as the process continues virtually unabated throughout the region. As discussed earlier, the growth of Latin American cities over the past fifty years is well documented and one can attribute the majority of this population explosion directly to internal migration. Dependency and world systems theory again offer interesting conclusions about the nature of migration within a peripheral nation that are important to note as a precipitating factor in the growth of New Social Movements within the average Latin American city. While not discrediting numerous peasant movements that have had a tremendous influence upon the economic and political landscape of Latin America, any study of urban movements would be lacking without an explanation of the considerable propensity within the region to migrate from the countryside to the city.

Again, dependency and world systems theory offer interesting takes on the nature of migration within the periphery that should serve as a theoretical framework. Dependency theory argues that the decision to migrate from a rural to an urban centre is characterized by uneven development predicated upon the unequal relationship between the core and the periphery. Therefore, Mexico's development pattern is generally uneven because of its dependence upon and integration into the American economy. As a result, low wages in Mexico, a consequence of its dependent development, and the desire of American based agribusiness and corporate industries for a cheap source of labour have induced massive migration within Mexico and around the globe to the industrial centres of their various nations.

World systems theory considers migration as occurring within a single overarching system that is in a constant state of transformation. The world system is characterized by uneven development both between and within nation states and is

increasingly integrated by an international division of labour. Within Mexico in particular, proponents suggest that "the penetration of outlying regions by capitalism has produced imbalances in their internal social and economic structures. Although first induced from the outside, such imbalances become internal to the incorporated societies and lead in time to migratory pressures"(Wilson, p.102). Therefore, internal migration within Mexico is predicated upon the larger system as people migrate from underdeveloped rural regions to urban centres where national and international capital is concentrated. The informal sector is a direct result of this migration when the formal capitalist sector is unable to absorb additional labour, either due to contraction or saturation, as landless peasants generally remain in the city even if they are unable to find adequate employment.

The primary motivation behind the decision to migrate is best articulated through chain-migration theory. This has been defined as "that movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation and (or) have initial accommodation and (or) employment arranged for them by means of primary relationships with previous migrants"(Wilson, p.108). For example, a sample of nine hundred and four migrants in Monterrey revealed that eighty-four per cent had friends or relatives there prior to their migration and two-thirds received some manner of assistance upon their arrival (ibid, p.109). In addition, motivation is generally determined by regional dynamics- local employment opportunities, the potential for the effective use of household employment, and local pay scales. Therefore, networks are extremely important in determining where people migrate and who is most likely to leave but the reasons people migrate is determined primarily by "macroeconomic variables leading to a distorted development, whether on the national, regional, or local

level, and the way in which these variables are experienced and interpreted by people with differential access to the means of production"(ibid, p.119). Those directly affected by the economic and social strain caused by these variables are obviously the most likely to migrate towards the city.

Shefner (1999) suggests that the economic transformation precipitated by the debt crisis, the resulting austerity measures, and the continuing growth of urban centres affected political opposition within Mexico in three very distinct ways that eventually led to a more conducive environment for social movements to prosper. The most obvious change stemmed from the fact that resources previously allocated to address urban problems had traditionally been distributed in a manner that maintained clientelism. Since clientelism can only function when the patron fulfills certain fundamental needs of the client, once the supply of resources declined as the need increased an opening was created for independent neighbourhood organizations to exploit. They began to organize and establish linkages with one another outside of the previously defined parameters of the state. This was a serious departure from the traditional practice of vertical integration.

The second change occurred naturally as the state began to diminish as the central component in the lives of the people. This was primarily the result of privatization and the reduced financial responsibility the state incurred as the social budget continued to be slashed. The decline in the state's economic influence resulted in a gradual loss of control over vast segments of the population, most notably the middle class, that previously remained subservient as long as the state played a pivotal role in maintaining their lifestyle. Employment in state sponsored enterprises declined throughout the crisis and was not subsequently increased once it began to recede. The

state operating as an external actor for the first time had a tremendous effect on how people began to perceive political opposition. They were no longer intrinsically tied to the PRI.

The final change affected the PRI directly as their illegitimacy was accelerated by the actual austerity measures they implemented. Previously prosperous sectors by Mexican standards, such as the urban working and middle classes, suffered along side the poor through hyperinflation and lack of access to credit. As a result, they became increasingly disenchanted with the ruling party. This political shift created new grievances the PRI had never encountered and a political environment emerged in which independent neighbourhood organizations could find support for their efforts to evade the traditional clientelist practices of the party. This shift was instrumental in the eventual demise of the party itself as is indicated by the rise of the PAN (National Action Party) as a conservative alternative. It was not the poor who eventually defeated the PRI, it was the upper and middle classes who had grown tired of its antics that now seemed disingenuous once they were no longer assured of adequate compensation.

Throughout the crisis it is important to bear in mind the extent to which the domestic economy is controlled by a small number of elites. In 1992, twenty-five companies produced forty-seven per cent of the GDP and the thirty-six individuals who comprise the Council of Mexican Businessmen (CMHN) controlled sixty-seven billion in assets, or roughly twenty-two per cent of the nation's GDP. Collectively, their firms employed over four hundred and fifty thousand workers. In comparison to the United States, the top twenty-five earning American corporations were only responsible for four percent of the nation's GDP during the same period (Cypher, 1993). This amounts to nothing less than a financial-economic oligarchy whose monopoly dominates all aspects

of the domestic Mexican economy with the power to render most federal decisions towards their best interests.

An interesting example of how the poor, despite their growing numbers, became virtually an afterthought during the crisis was the PACTO. On December 15 1987, the Mexican government, representatives of labour, agriculture, and business signed the 'Pact of Economic Solidarity' or PACTO with the primary objective of curtailing inflation without causing a future recession. While inflation was curtailed to a certain extent, nominal interest rates on public debt declined much less rapidly than envisioned resulting in a situation where Mexico became a nation of currency flight rather than one of foreign investment, an oddity to say the least for a peripheral nation. While evidence is mixed as to the success of the PACTO at the multilateral level, it seems obvious that it failed the poorest segments of Mexican society primarily because it was not designed in their best interests. Even in proclaiming its virtues, the OECD seems to neglect the irony in such statements as,

> "Extremely high real interest rates of over 30 per cent accompanying the rapid disinflation during the initial phases of the PACTO clearly suggest that to begin with it failed to convince wealth holders that inflation would be reduced rapidly. On the other hand, real wages actually declined during the initial phase of the PACTO, contributing to improving supply conditions" (OECD Mexico 1991/92, p.60).

The effects of a wage decline during prolonged inflationary periods may have improved supply conditions for certain industrialists but only produced additional strife for their employees.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the debt crisis and austerity measures produced a wave of protest that became a normal part of daily life in Mexico. That being said, and despite draconian measures on behalf of all levels of government, there was only

limited, if any, organized political protest by trade unions and their supporters. On the contrary, the majority of unions and their members remained virtually silent in the face of significant hardships sustained by their constituents and subsidiaries. This can be attributed to basically two factors: the close ties most unions enjoyed with the ruling political party (in this case the PRI) and the fact that the substantial loss of employment undermined the very unions themselves by discouraging those still employed to become militant. Vanderbush (1996) defines the former in terms of a vicious circle. He concludes that,

> "while incorporated labor was relatively well situated during the times of economic growth, their capacity to defend workers' interests during times of economic hardship is quite limited. The Mexican rank and file is dependent on labor leaders, who in turn view their own power as dependent on the PRI state. As a result, labor has been unable to effectively influence policy in the face of a government implementing an economic restructuring predicated on the quiescence of workers" (Vanderbush, p.67).

It also must be noted that many trade unions in Mexico are considered 'company unions', described by La Botz (2001) as "organized on a company or plant-by-plant basis [which have] little or no bargaining power, do little to represent workers, and function primarily to block the formation of independent unions" (p.16). These corporately organized unions are the preferred choice of many maquiladora plants and were prominent throughout the country under the PRI. Given that the current president enjoys a very close relationship with many of these plants, it is doubtful this pattern will change during the foreseeable future. As a result, independent grassroots organizations became one of the only legitimate sources of civil mobilization during times of extreme austerity and beyond.

Given the inherent impotency of most trade unions, Portes (1990) argues that the debt crisis became the pivotal event marking the emergence of New Social Movements

throughout the region and Mexico in particular. He suggests that it "has resulted in the gradual weakening of traditional organized movements, like trade unions, and the emergence of what Latin American scholars have dubbed the new social movements; those made up of young people, women, residential associations, church-sponsored 'grassroots' communities, and similar groups" (p.30). In his opinion, these movements are far less susceptible to intimidation and coercion and became increasingly popular as the region became modernized once people became aware of the struggles and hardships others were experiencing in addition to themselves. This allowed many of these organizations the opportunity to reach and influence a broader spectrum of individuals than ever before. Slater (1985) echoes this assertion by concluding that the "contraction of capitalist development, especially in the industrial sector, and the pervasive and devastating socio-economic effects of the debt crisis have led to a growing impoverishment that cannot be left out of account in any consideration of the genesis of the new social movements" (p.10). The impotency of most local trade unions certainly contributed as well.

Mexico is not unlike most other nations in the region. Traditionally, Latin American governments have been characterized by the substantial proportion of resources they tend to control and the extent to which they represent one of the major employers within their nation. Even today, despite the adjustment programmes and extensive decentralization, these governments are still considerably active within their individual economies. In general, employment tends to extend beyond public administration into semi-public or even private corporations that control vast sectors of the economy. Governments frequently control prices, allocate resources, collect a

variety of direct and indirect taxes, and yield broad powers to impose sanctions as a means of influencing decisions.

In Mexico, political power is concentrated at the apex of the state, in the hands of the president and his closest advisors. In general, co-optation and clientelism has served as an effective and efficient means of control throughout the political and administrative system. It has effectively channelled and scaled down demands, and until quite recently, paralysed nearly all potential opposition. This was perpetuated from administration to administration because for most of the last century, and despite the appearance of routine elections, Mexico has been a single party state controlled by the PRI through corruption, coercion, and oppression. It was not until July 2000 that Vincente Fox became the first opposition leader to wrestle political control from the PRI in more than seven decades, ending the longest single party political dynasty in the world.

As the leader of the conservative National Action Party (PAN), the former governor of Guanajuato is best known for 'maquilarizing' his state, luring more than seventy foreign-owned assembly plants during his five years in office. His social policy has been described as "grounded in the Social Christian doctrine of good works" (Ross, p.11) with the majority of his activities concentrated on developing an extensive system of micro-credit schemes designed to place a few more dollars in the hands of the poor with the idea that this additional revenue will go towards the purchase of material possessions, like a television set or small automobile, defined by the then-governor as some the most pressing needs of his poorest constituents. He also makes no secret that he adheres to the doctrines of neo-liberalism and is a vocal proponent of free trade and a market dominated economy. Therefore, one should expect few alterations to the economic and social policies of the previous administration and one could argue that he

may be more conservative than many of his predecessors in the PRI. As a former Coke-a-Cola executive, he has filled the bulk of his cabinet positions with a number of corporate elites and seems to have little to no intention of addressing the structural conditions of poverty within his nation. In fact, a significant percentage of his cabinet represent a number of the multinationals Fox fought so hard to attract during his time as governor and the majority were selected by the American consortium of Korn-Ferry & Hazzard rather than the president himself (Ross, 2001). For these reasons, the current PAN administration should be regarded as simply a new twist on the old PRI theme. For all intense and purposes, only the acronym has changed.

There are a variety of ways low-income groups can mobilize to counteract the influence of the dominant party. At the municipal level, a study of three low-income areas of Mexico City by Eckstein (1992) determined that despite a wide range of social and economic associations, residents still organized on their own to deal with municipal authorities on a number of issues. One of the most popular initiatives was joining national groups that dealt directly with various authorities, publicly profess a concern for social welfare, and had legitimate grassroots organization. Despite these efforts and regardless of their perceived influence, most associations met with only limited success. Eckstein (1992) insists that,

> "The informal process that inhibit the political effectiveness of organized residents are rooted in various national institutional arrangements: mainly in the hierarchical nature of national inter and intragroup relations, the class structure, the personalistic style of Mexican politics, the multiplicity of groups operating nationally along with the containment of overt elite competition, and the governments threat to apply force" (Eckstein, p.186).

In this sense, she suggests there are national political 'rules of the game' that must be adhered to by local officials if they endeavour to advance politically or obtain even

limited material concessions for their constituents. Those who refuse to become involved are socially and politically isolated and their constituency is virtually neglected. Local subordinates almost always conform with the expectations of higher-ranking functionaries, regardless if they are real or imagined, because the prospect of removal from office precludes any direct concerns over their constituents. This results in a situation where "appropriate local concerns are delimited and heads of local groups are encouraged to be subservient, although they are not necessarily rewarded (ibid, p.186)" and is the epitome of Mexican clientelism.

This is not uncommon throughout the region as local leaders usually establish institutional ties with national political/administrative groups to give their constituents a sense of inclusion. By doing so, their political and social mobility is enhanced, and they also secure certain basic services in the process. There are often covert relationships fashioned with non-local functionaries because of the fear that their constituents may be potentially hostile to an open association with the ruling party. Therefore, in most cases the urban poor are unable to use typically democratic political institutions to advance their own interests effectively because their plight is intimately linked to the broader power structures but their representation is generally only concerned with securing certain limited infrastructural advances. During the reign of the PRI, the reality for many of the urban poor in Mexico was that they were no better off than those in other, non-democratic Latin American nations experiencing a military dictatorship. Initial indications do not seem promising for substantial changes despite a new administration.

3.2 Urban Protest and New Social Movements within a Mexican Context; the Differences between Structurally Focused and Service Providing Movements

The earthquake that rocked Mexico City in 1985 was a pivotal event in Mexican History. Amid the massive destruction arose a number of movements, the most famous will be discussed in the following section. Initially, a distinction must be made between structurally focused movements and those groups concerned with the provision of services, since the majority of the latter mobilized shortly after the disaster. Groups who's primary concern is the provision services will not be considered a New Social Movement by the standards of this paper, for reasons that will be elaborated upon further within the following sections.

One of the most intriguing structurally focused movements to initially mobilize as a result of the earthquake is the *Asamblea de Barrios* (Assembly of Neighbourhoods), a popular urban movement initially formed by those left homeless by the disaster that eventually expanded its membership and began to address the issues of affordable housing and the extension of urban services to the periphery of the Federal District. Even within the movement itself there was the recognition that similar movements with less idealistic motives were hampering the Assembly's efforts. Their leader, Francisco Saucedo, expressed their dilemma in the following terms,

> "If we go to the very authorities that we characterize as illegitimate and ask for housing, we end up reinforcing the present structures. We give the government the opportunity to resolve our problem with housing, but we reinforce its position. But, if we go with other proposals and alternatives and if we pose global issues that are likely to modify the structure of government, at least we are calling these structures into question (Hellman, p.137)".

Therefore, those movements and organizations concerned primarily with the proliferation of basic services may actually hamper the efforts of movements such as Saucedo's. He described this by explaining that,

> "We have, in fact, a problem with movements that are similar to ours but from which we are trying to distance ourselves... The work involved in identifying and analyzing [potential properties] is very complex... But at the same time that we are pressing the authorities to expropriate these holdings as provided for in the law, other popular organizations show up at the Ministry of Urban Development saying 'What we want is a milk store for our *colonia*.' In this way they make it easy for the authorities to respond by saying 'Since an urban expropriation is very difficult, we will give you a *lecheria* instead. We say to these *companeros* 'You yourselves are demobilizing the movement, because the expropriation of the speculators' holdings is the key. But these other groups are ready to settle for a *lecheria* or a *tortilleria*, which is a benefit, to be sure, but one that never comes to the heart of the housing problem (Hellman, p.136-137)."

This is indicative of the problems facing most, if not all, opposition movements within Mexico and throughout the region. They are constantly confronted with two equally unappealing alternatives. Either to become co-opted by the regime by securing certain material concessions that appeal to their supporters thereby compromising their independence and ability to criticize the government and its policies towards the poor, or, as Hellman (1994) argues,

> "maintain a staunch independence from the regime but risk the loss of the popular support they command because members desperately need the material benefits and concessions for which the organization is struggling and may not be able to afford the luxury of striking a more militant, oppositional stance" (p.133).

In an attempt to rectify this dilemma, she makes a distinction between mass popular movements and political parties. She believes that often observers expect social movements to accomplish many of the objectives that political parties in the past have been unable to attain and suggests that, perhaps, it is not the role of a mass popular movement to formulate and promote an alternative vision of society but rather that role should remain within the realm of organized parties. To this end, she concludes that

> "a more realistic conception of the role and potential of urban movements would take into account the difference between a group dedicated to the day-to-day struggle for life's basic necessities and a political party that more properly bears the burden of theorizing and organizing to promote broad societal change and the expansion of institutionalized forms of democratic expression (p.139)."

If this is the case, then what is the role of movements like the Assembly of Neighbourhoods that, while obviously having a political agenda, lack the institutionalization of a political party but endeavour to address structural issues? Are they misguided or simply filling a void that existing political parties have created through a lack of ability or interest? It seems short sighted to suggest that structural concerns can only be properly articulated and addressed through political institutions when those very institutions are often at the centre of the majority of grievances aimed towards it. The political institutionalization of structurally focused movements may be a natural progression in time but Hellman and others mistakenly place the onus on those movements to institutionalize too quickly rather than convincing service providing organizations that their energy may be better served by recognizing the structural conditions of their oppression and operate under the assumption that a combined effort addressing this reality may be more beneficial. By hampering the efforts to alleviate the root causes of their current situation, they only succeed in ensuring that their continued services will be required.

Another example is the *Comite de Defensa Popular* (Committee for Popular Defense- CDP), an urban popular movement based in the northern state of Durango, exemplifies the tendency for these groups to focus upon the delivery of material concessions rather than addressing the larger issue of structural oppression. Haber found that internal democracy within the organization was virtually non-existent and that the Salinas government of the day had sufficiently co-opted the movement to serve its own purposes. The government encouraged the CDP to register as a political party, gave it funding for local business ventures, and even offered its support during a conflict with

the local state governor. From the government's perspective, it was good business to encourage groups like the CDP. According to Hellman,

> "the practice of encouraging the growth of independent groups that operate outside of the official party channels is but another long-standing technique of control... Traditionally this manoeuvre serves two purposes. The development of a rival organization may stimulate corrupt or ineffectual PRI-linked organizations to mend their ways- and support thrown by the president to some independent group may undercut the attraction of other independent organizations that are more genuinely threatening to the regime (Hellman, p.132)."

Salinas considered the CDP to be non-threatening, unlike the Assembly of Neighbourhoods who received no such assistance, because they were primarily concerned with material gains and the group continues to function long after the Salinas administration collapsed for that very reason.

That being the case, Hellman argues that the majority of urban popular movements in Mexico seem to follow the democratizing trends of their society rather than initiating that process themselves. Therefore, internal democracy is generally not a primary concern until it becomes apparent that the movement cannot continue to grow without it. In the case of CDP,

> "internal democracy is not of paramount importance among the rank-and-file, who are far more concerned with the organization's ability to deliver goods and extract concessions from the state than they are with questions of internal equality and participatory democracy (ibid. p.133)."

Through a study of the CDP and similar movements throughout the country, Hellman reaches the startling conclusion that,

> "internal democratization of the CDP and popular movements, parties, political institutions, and Mexican political life in general is associated with the degree to which Mexico experiences a significant political, economic, and social democratization process (ibid. p.134-135)."

Given this revelation, one would have to conclude that only when the Mexican system as a whole becomes increasingly democratic, something it continues to struggle with today, will the organizations that are supposed to facilitate that process become equally democratic within their own internal composition, an irony that should not be lost upon even the most casual of observers.

Therefore, New Social Movements in Mexico may face a variety of issues that affect the lives of every individual in the region but democracy seems to be the most contentious. As the region began to realize an increased number of democratic regimes during the last ten years with the PAN victory of 2000, an accelerated transition to a more open market economy, democracy, and transparency have become pivotal issues within Mexican politics. There are those who argue that the trend is dangerously masked in the idea of increased civil liberties which are often linked to an individualistically centred society and a general weakening of the social bond. Others, such as Jelin (1997) suggest that in this context New Social Movements can play a productive dual role. She states that,

> "they represent collective systems of reciprocal recognition, expressing old and new collective identities with important cultural and symbolic components. They are also non-party political intermediaries, who bring the needs and demands of unarticulated voices to the public sphere, linking them to state institutions" (Jelin, p.97).

In this regard, they should be seen as the means through which dynamic democracy can be insured for those who previously had little to no voice at all.

New Social Movements in Mexico are, therefore, characteristic of others in the region in that they continue to have a crisis in identity and always run the risk of being co-opted. Those consumed by the provision of services, even if they fail to meet the

literal requirements of what constitutes a movement, are nonetheless often confused with other structurally oriented movements and generally do a disservice as a result. It seems that movements concerned with the actual structural issues of poverty are far less apt to operate undemocratically even if the nature of their organization is hierarchical. The challenge is to continue voicing the concerns of the poor and marginalized, in the face of mounting opposition, without becoming an extension of the problem by conceding core values for minor concessions by the state. This may involve the institutionalization of many New Social Movements into genuine political parties or simply the determination to not adhere to municipal solutions for regional and global problems.

3.3 The Extenuating Circumstances Surrounding the 1985 Mexico City Earthquake

Even those movements deemed successful in mobilizing a government response have an aire of co-optation. An obvious example is the Mexico City earthquake. In 1985, after a devastating earthquake, much of the city lay in ruin. Those primarily affected were the urban poor. When the government hesitated in providing adequate housing and compensation, thousands took to the streets on masse marching directly to the residence of the mayor and protesting in the city's central square of Zocalo. In March 1986, as many as fifty-thousand residents threatened to campout at Azteca Stadium disrupting the impending World Cup Soccer Tournament scheduled for two months later. Eventually, they succeeded in convincing the government to expropriate the property of absentee landlords and build new dwellings to be owned by former tenants. Also, the government agreed to construct temporary housing to provide shelter during the construction process. When those temporary dwellings were deemed unacceptable due to poor construction and horrific conditions, the residents burnt them down and forced the government to construct safer housing in their place. These actions

were unprecedented in the history of Mexico City and were celebrated as an example of how mass mobilization and protest can produce substantive, long-term results.

Therefore, disorderly tactics can succeed in specific circumstances and limited gains on local issues are possible as long as the underlying structural causes of poverty are not addressed. The Mexico City earthquake was unique in that it received extensive international exposure, and foreign agencies, affluent Mexicans, and especially the Catholic church supported the rebuilding effort. The fact that the World Cup was being played in the city had a tremendous impact since the Mexican government had been preparing for the event for years and did not want it disrupted under any circumstances. Therefore, the affected neighbourhoods were not isolated, politically or socially, as low income communities are typically in similar situations. In addition, they confronted the state in a manner that did not threaten the underlying structures of their larger predicament, such as the nature of their situation, and had the support of richer, more powerful allies both from within Mexico, throughout the region, and the world. Even though the government made significant concessions, it required the movement to work with, not against, it. Thus, it co-opted the opposition with various reforms until order was restored and shortly thereafter, the situation returned to normal.

3.4 Church Base Communities (CEBs) within a Mexican Context; the Case of Oaxaca

Church Base Communities (or *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*- CEBs) are a vibrant and visible component within all aspects of Mexican society. While it is obvious that the vast majority are located within the rural sector (as many as seventy per cent by some estimations) there are increasing numbers being found in the cities. The impetus behind their creation is no different than anywhere else in Latin America, poverty. In

many respects, the famous line by Henry Selby that 'Mexico is a rich country filled with poor people' still holds true today. CEBs are viewed as a means through which that poverty can be addressed. The Catholic church initially encouraged the formation of CEBs in Mexico for two very distinct reasons; a prolonged shortage of priests and nuns resulting in the closure of many churches and an increasing number of Protestants being found throughout the country during the seventies and eighties. It was getting to the point that people were being forced to commute, often long distances, even during holidays and holy periods in order to worship and the luxury of a parish priest in every locale was becoming a distant memory for many Catholics. Consequently, the number of Protestants almost doubled during this time, and although they still represent a small minority (less than 5 per cent), Protestant preachers outnumbered Catholic priests nearly two to one in many communities (MacNabb and Rees, p.731). The Catholic Church in Mexico hoped that CEBs could at once fill the spiritual void left by the absence of clergy while promoting Catholicism throughout the country at the same time.

Mexican CEBs, like many others in the region, are characterized by their democratic nature and the predominant role played by women. Inherent to any CEB is a combination of Catholicism with a recognition of the relevant social issues of each individual community. It includes an holistic approach that endeavours to explain reality, and the participants reactions to it, through Christianity, cultural recognition, the nature of production, ecology, and any other perspective or issue concerning the community at large or participants individually. In this respect, CEBs should not be considered any different than other New Social Movements in Latin America as they correspond to Smith's working definition of "movements organized around issues of culture, identity, life-style or place...which are [typically] organized around grievances

and identities which are distinct from the workplace and process of production"(Smith, p.27- also in the Theory of NSM's section).

The fact that women are involved in practically every aspect of their local CEB makes them unique in the region. Men and women are treated equally during Bible reflections and women are encouraged to speak out about all issues related to community life. Since the majority of members tend to be women, they often take a lead role in committees and discussions. They organize meetings, lead groups, and run projects. This is one of the few instances, in Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America, where women and men function as equals and where each can express an opinion on any issue or topic relevant to the discussion.

Many CEBs in Mexico also include a political component by simply allowing their members to become politically aware of their environment. Through their democratic nature and emphasis on group discussion, they demonstrate that every individual possesses a voice, regardless of their economic and social status, and that collective organization can influence public policy and perceptions. During an extensive study of urban CEBs located within the provincial capital of Oaxaca in the southern Mexican province of the same name, MacNabb and Rees (1993) conclude that many CEBs have redefined the concept of 'community' in terms of their religious activity, gender roles, and identity. This has resulted in political demands centred around issues of consumption (food, services, and the like) rather than traditional issues of production (primarily wages and employment) that have generally been the focus of trade unions and political parties. In this respect, community identity becomes the primary element in determining collective consciousness and mode of action rather than identities associated with class. Community organization becomes the most important vehicle in

determining the politicization of its members, often at the impetus of the local CEB. In addition to discussions, many CEBs will publish guides on local and national political parties, hold seminars on local issues and impending elections, and support various groups and initiatives relevant to their own causes and concerns.

Most CEBs are characterized by a number of commissions that are formed to address specific issues related to improving the lives of participants and the quality of life in their community. They can be as diverse as the Health Commission, which teaches classes on nutrition and promotes better living habits, to the Social Commission, which instructs new members on how to become aware of the social and political reality of their community and nation. The name and number of commissions may vary between individual CEBs but each operates according to this principle in some manner. Almost every CEB has an elected leader (animador), usually a lay person, who meets periodically with other leaders to discuss progress, coordinate events and classes, and reflect upon the Bible. This is usually done with the blessing of a parish priest and local bishop because another characteristic of Mexican CEBs is their close relationship with the national Church and the fact that the majority rarely deviate far from its supervision.

The primary function of Mexican CEBs is no different than others around the region. In Oaxaca, they provide a forum for weekly meetings where participants discuss their problems and offer reflections and solutions to the group according to a Christian perspective. Although these discussions are often led by the animador, every member is encouraged to speak. From this derives a plan of action and a sense of empowerment as members become increasingly comfortable within the group setting and realize that their participation is a necessary consequence of collective organization. In this respect, the CEB serves as a quasi group therapy session with the purpose of providing the means to

precipitate action. The majority operate according to the motto 'See, Think, Act' ('Ver, Pensar, Obrar' as discussed in the section on liberation theology) which combines consciousness-raising through comprehension (seeing) with prayer and the discussion of problems (thinking) resulting in increased participation in communal life and the struggle towards social change (action). Despite the fact that most CEBs are created at the behest of clergy, and usually with the blessing of the national Church, decisions are voted upon by members acting collectively as a group and therefore, are the epitome of base generated social action.

Almost every CEB in Mexico operates according to the Caja system. These are similar to a community credit union that provides members with access to credit they otherwise would not qualify for under normal circumstances. Each individual caja is under the auspice of a credit committee consisting of at least three members of the CEB and the vast majority of loans are given to local women for home repairs, children's clothing, and the other necessities of life. The applicant fills out an application stating the amount of money they require, what the money is for, how many dependents they have, and how long they intend to take to pay it back. The amounts vary depending upon the situation, ranging from marginal amounts to well in excess of 400,000 pesos, but a typical loan is usually in the range of about 250,000 pesos or $300 Canadian. Occasionally an applicant will be required to name a co-signer in the event that they may be unable to repay the loan but this is not usually a standard practice. More often, once the application is reviewed, and it becomes apparent that the applicant will have difficulty repaying, the community simply gives the money to the individual in need without penalty (McNabb and Rees, 1993).

The cajas are a community endeavour where members contribute to a common fund on a weekly basis and are usually allowed to borrow as much as twice the amount they have contributed. Interest ranges from two to six per cent, depending upon the parish, with an average of six months to repay. Following each six-month period, any remaining money is divided amongst the members, with the exception of usually twenty percent that serves as a float and emergency fund for the future. In most cases, non-members are allowed to borrow as well providing that a member takes out the loan in their name. Many CEBs will also hold periodic bazaars to raise funds for their parish and their local caja. This system operates outside the parameters of state and local governments and is designed to serve as means for people who would not usually qualify for standard loans to improve their situation with the assistance of their local community (McNabb and Rees, 1993).

3.5 Urban CEBs and the Metalworkers Strike of 1979 in Sao Bernardo Brazil

As previously noted, CEBs are active within many urban centres throughout Latin America. The case of Oaxaca, with a population of more than 240 000, illustrates that as the region becomes increasingly urbanized, base communities are becoming more prominent within the cities, regardless if they maintain many of their original rural qualities. In fact, a major attraction is their focus on community, or neighbourhoods, as the centre of spiritual and social progression. As cities continue to swell, people are becoming nostalgic, especially the poor, about an era gone by when everyone knew their neighbour and the church served as the cultural hub of a community. CEBs serve an important function in filling that void.

An example of how active CEBs can become within urban protest and New Social Movements occurred during 1979 in the city of Sao Bernardo in Southern Brazil.

The relationship between the local base communities and the Metalworkers strike in April of that year served as an early reminder of the influence and social capacity embodied within many CEBs. Urban base communities accentuate this capacity through their involvement with easily identifiable issues, such as economic discrepancies and infrastructural demands. The case of Sao Bernardo is relevant to Mexico because it illustrates the capacity of urban CEBs to become active in important issues that affect their members and the community at large. It, therefore, serves as an example for other base communities throughout the region.

The diocese of Sao Andre includes the most industrialized region of Brazil including the city of Sao Bernardo de Campos, a major manufacturing centre just south of Sao Paulo. A number of large, transnational corporations operate factories in the city including Volkswagon, Ford, Chrysler, and Mercedes-Benz. Fifty-five per cent of the active labour force, over 400,000 people at the time, were employed in some industrial capacity and 70,000 by those four corporations alone. On the contrary, less than one per cent of the population were considered to have a rural occupation during the time of the strike (Vink, 1985).

Brazilian trade unions have generally had a reputation for their close relationship with the state and their ability to suppress almost all forms of dissent amongst their workers. Trade unions possessed almost incidental bargaining power, especially during the military regimes, and served more as a source of recreation than representation for their members. This began to change during the seventies as general discontent began to emerge within many factories precipitated primarily by a prolonged recession that ravaged the Brazilian economy. An important component of this increased focus upon labour was the Labour Pastoral (PO), created during the sixties to represent the Brazilian

church in the realm of labour that gradually began to assume more influence throughout the decade of the seventies. One of the motives behind the creation of the PO was to increase church credibility amongst the working class while maintaining a certain independence from labour organizations and the state at the same time. It should be noted that the PO was never considered a Christian union nor a parallel movement but an avenue where "workers act according to the orientation of the unions...[and] reflect on their activities in the light of the Gospel" (Vink, p.107). The eventual rise in prominence of the PO illustrates the extensive influence of liberation theology at this time, perhaps at its apex during the late seventies. The PO made serious inroads into the labour community that served as a foundation for future collaboration, without which an eventual relationship between base communities and trade unions could not have been possible.

As talks broke down in the Spring of 1979 between the unions and various corporations, primarily over job security, a Committee of Mobilization and Wages was formed out of elected representatives from throughout the district. Local CEBs initiated the consolidation of many unions within the district into a coalition and a picket line was formed consisting initially of representatives from as many as twenty-three unions. As the courts considered the legality of the strike, fifteen union members were detained by the army, prompting local bishops to declare their solidarity with the strikers. For the first time in Brazilian history, the Labour court declared itself incompetent to judge the case and a march in support of the strike was initiated that eventually included the participation of over 120,000 people (Vink, 1993). The rift between workers and employers deepened to the point where much of the organization and activities were gradually shifted from the factory floor to neighbourhoods and churches. Local CEBs

became "active in the collection of food supplies and money, the distribution of supplies to strikers in financial problems, [and in] the visiting of families and distribution of bulletins" (Vink, p.113).

Ultimately, through imprisonments and the interjection of the military, strikers were forced back to work after forty-one days. Although perceived as a corporate victory, the impact of the strike was felt for years and the influence of local base communities signified a complete reversal of the previous relationship between church and state. They served as points of fundamental support through their fundraising and solidarity. It must be noted that there was always an important distinction between the base communities and those working on their behalf. Vink suggests that while "the contribution of the church and the grassroot communities was important, ...Christians participating in the organization of the strike did this as members of the working class, not as members of the church" (p.119). Therefore, the base communities served as venues where workers could evaluate their actions through a Christian perspective. Vink describes this as "a different vision of Christianity, one related to the liberation of the working class and with a total commitment to the struggle" (ibid, p.120), what later became the definition of liberation theology.

So regardless that the strike eventually failed to secure the material concessions it sought or that CEBs primarily assumed a peripheral role, the strike of Sao Bernardo demonstrated that collaboration between trade unions and base communities was possible and beneficial to both sides. In addition, it proved that faith can play a positive role in motivating people into social commitment. The question arises whether that faith can be instrumental in fundamentally altering the structural conditions that proved to be too powerful in the final analysis of Sao Bernardo. The fact that the strike eventually

failed speaks volumes but should be considered within the context of a military dictatorship that was eventually deposed. Perhaps a more important question is whether anything has improved in the wake of the past twenty years? Doubtful, given the global prowess of many of the transnational corporations in question that have undoubtedly strengthened their ability to control their workforce in recent years through a variety of agreements from NAFTA to the WTO. This is all the more reason for base communities to continue their productive role of facilitating a general solidarity amongst the poor and working classes in the wake of such international authority.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 The Evolution of New Social Movement Theory and the Correlation Between Theory and Reality

Social Movements have been studied for at least fifty years. Initially, there were negative connotations surrounding movements accentuated by a tendency to explain them as ad hoc formations exhibiting few organizational characteristics. Stryker (2000) articulates this early conception of protest movements as "products of alienation, relative deprivation, frustrations derived from status inconsistency, and the actions of misfits" (p.2) that were irrational, or at least non-rational, reactions and in no sense thoughtful responses to legitimate concerns. This began to change during the sixties and seventies as the propensity to perceive them in social psychological terms gradually dissipated due to the fact that many of the social scientists who studied social movements eventually became actively involved and could not accept the characterization of their actions as irrational. As a result, social movements in general were viewed in a more positive light as "purposive organizations comprised of rational actors pursuing strategic goals"(Buechler, p.20). The past twenty years have been characterized by a general ambivalence towards social movements initially caused by two factors; the emergence of a number of right-wing counter movements that delegitimized the progressive character of movements in general and an intellectual shift towards postmodernism that rendered their historical progression virtually irrelevant.

It now seems that New Social Movements are currently experiencing a resurgence of sorts. Activists and scholars alike are drawn to their ability to organize large numbers of people around issues that transcend specific locales and speak directly to the disadvantaged. Globalization and the increasingly important role placed upon civil society to articulate the economic and social inequities of the liberal democratic

capitalist system have resulted in New Social Movements becoming one of the only legitimate remaining means of protest at the disposal of activists. This can have a tremendous effect on the study of movements when certain individuals choose to ascribe them various qualities they may not deserve in an attempt to glamorize their capacity to initiate substantive results.

Therefore, in order to arrive at an adequate assessment of New Social Movements and the correlation between theory and reality, it is necessary to provide some insight into collective action, class position, and consciousness. To this end, Eder (1985), despite his Eurocentric focus, contributes a great deal to the analysis of collective action. Inherent to his inquiry is a distinction between objective and subjective class positions and that a necessary precondition for collective action lie in a combination of the two. Accordingly, the theory of objective class position maintains that collective action is the result of the objective structure of class position while the theory of subjective class position entails that collective action is the result of the subjective consciousness individuals have of their particular class position. Consequently, a combination of the two would be that collective action occurs naturally from the point when individuals become conscious of their objective position within a given social reality.

Obviously, this is not always the case. It seems the construction of a New Social Movement in this respect is perceived as a social phenomena created primarily by external forces with very little to explain the internal motivations behind that mobilization. Therefore, according to Eder, in order to address this problem any explanation of collective action must resolve is the acquisition of 'habitus' or a collective disposition that guarantees the reproduction of objective and subjective

structures. Habitus becomes the central component to any mass organization and is the primary factor in determining the commitment and personal identification of its members. Eder articulates it in the following terms,

> "The form of the collective acquisition of a habitus is thus the central explanatory variable in the analysis of collective protest. The objective class position and subjective class consciousness therefore contains only necessary but not adequate preconditions of collective action. Adequate conditions are only to be found if one takes into account the life world, which is at the same time objectively structured and the prerequisite for the construction of a collective consciousness" (Eder, p.873-874).

Therefore, the two variables of objective class position and subjective class consciousness combined together as a habitus establish the foundation for any organized form of collective protest that can eventually mature into a New Social Movement.

It is important to note that given the current international environment and the evolution of New Social Movement theory throughout the decades, there are a number of themes that seem to be prominent amongst almost every version. Buechler (2000) identifies eight critical themes he believes are necessary components to any theory of New Social Movements. The first concerns the concept of societal totality that serves as the precondition for the emergence of collective action. Virtually every theory of social movements relies upon "a historically specific social formation as the structural backdrop for contemporary forms of collective action" (p.46) that serves as the theoretical justification for current endeavours. Related to this theme is the contention that these theories provide a causal claim that links these movements to this societal totality that is best observed as a reaction against the current state of affairs characterized by bureaucratic states, free market capitalism, and scientized relationships. In this sense, New Social Movements are historically specific responses to the modern

proclivity towards materialistic values based upon the increased emphasis upon consumption and a perceived loss of identity.

The third theme concerns the rapidly changing social base of most movements. There are those, including Offe and Eder cited in this paper, who argue their primary base of support is rooted in the emerging middle class. While this may certainly be the case within the industrial societies of the West, others, with whom I am inclined to agree, perceive these movements as primarily devoid of class analysis that focus upon more recent statuses such as race, ethnicity, gender, and citizenship instead. It could be argued quite convincingly that certain New Social Movements in the South (especially those rooted around the issue of poverty) could benefit from a more concerted class analysis rather than focusing so diligently upon issues of community and identity. Nonetheless, the fact that there is no solid foundation of support demonstrates the extent to which the social base has become much more complex than traditional activism when class analysis provided the only serious alternative. Therefore, connected to this is a fourth theme that suggests the "ability of people to engage in collective action is increasingly tied to their ability to define an identity in the first place" (p.47). Unlike many examples of collective action in the past where the identity of the participants was defined primarily as a reaction to their opposition, such as labour vs. management, the New Social Movements of today are founded in large part on their ability to define a distinct identity of their own, not as a reaction but more as a declaration- We are women! We are oppressed! We are marginalized! These are not identities based upon a clearly defined opposition as much as they are an articulation of a group distinction that is legitimate in its own right.

This can lead to a fifth theme which perceives New Social Movements as a reaction to the politicization of previously intimate and private social topics. As the distinction between what constitutes personal and political space is becomes increasingly blurred, many New Social Movements are considered as a response to the systematic politicization of life rather than the instigators of that process. A major consequence of this trend is how pervasive identity politics has become as a strategy. Related is a sixth theme that the inherent values considered to characterize these movements in general should be the sheer number of ideas and themes that epitomize many diverse movements. Certain authors argue that this should be their defining feature while others view this diversity as rooted in postmaterialist values that celebrate the quality of life, often at the expense of political influence, because these movements are generally not interested in compromising their principles in an effort to broaden their social base. Therefore, they tend to emphasize autonomy and democratization rather than political mobility and access to institutionalized space.

The fact that many movements rely upon symbolic forms of resistance that appeal directly to their cultural values associated with their specific identity as opposed to other more conventional means of remonstration is the seventh theme. Buechler characterizes this cultural emphasis as a rejection of "conventional goals, tactics, and strategies in favor of the exploration of new identities, meanings, signs, and symbols" (Buechler, p.47). While this can be construed as apolitical, proponents argue that cultural forms of social protest should be considered legitimate if the manner in which they are conveyed is anti-hegemonic. By organizing relationships that challenge the dominant social hierarchy, symbolic forms of resistance can provide a valid means of opposition on the grounds that "if hegemony is [considered] an important form of social

power, [then] the culturally oriented, antihegemonic politics of many new movements is a valid form of resistance" (ibid. p.47-48). Therefore, these movements become contentious simply by promoting an alternative lifestyle, economic system, or means of expression.

The final theme is the preference many New Social Movements seem to have for decentralized, participatory, and informal methods of organization. In this respect, their organizational structure is more an expression of their values and identities than a means to increase their social and political exposure. This is often characterized by periods of increased visibility and latent dormancy as participants organize for specific battles and then recede towards their particular subcultures to prepare for the next round of activism. Internally, this can create dissention and the movement can be perceived as indecisive or socially irrelevant if the situation does not arise to provoke a broader interest. Although this may not affect the commitment of its most ardent supporters, it can have a serious impact on those participating upon the margins of the movement who become frustrated by its perceived inability to influence broader society other than during times of obvious struggle.

This leads to an obvious distinction between two diametrically opposed versions of New Social Movement theory that extends well beyond the conflict between structurally focused movements and those primarily concerned with the provision of services. The political version of New Social Movement theory is "macro oriented in general and state oriented in particular...[and] retains a concern with strategic questions and instrumental action as the ultimate goals of social movements while recognizing the importance of identity formation, grievance definition, and interest articulation as intermediate steps in the process of movement activism"(Buechler, p.48). These

movements may accept that new identities based on race, gender, or nationality can play a limited role in broadening the social base of action, perhaps as part of a limited coalition, but remain convinced that class-based social activism should not be abandoned in the process. Accordingly, this version tends to be quite critical of the 'apolitical' nature symbolic forms of resistance tend to exhibit because it seems to limit their potential for producing meaningful social change. This perspective defends class-based analysis as essential for comprehending the complexity of contemporary society, and its contradictory nature, as the preconditions for social activism. Movements that ascribe to this belief remain convinced that social and economic inequalities can only be properly addressed at the political level. Ignoring politics is, in essence, accepting subjugation.

The alternative version of New Social Movement theory focuses primarily upon the influence of culture. Cultural theories tend to emphasize the "decentralized nature of both power and resistance...[and] is not so macro oriented or state centred but focuses on everyday life, civil society, and the creation of free spaces between state and civil society"(ibid, p.48). It argues that current society is essentially dominated by information technology "whose administrative codes conceal forms of domination [and therefore] emphasizes symbolic expressions that challenge the instrumental logic of systemic domination"(ibid, p.48). According to this perspective, traditional class-based analysis should have been abandoned once it became obvious that labour-based constituencies for social activism were being transcended along with industrial capitalism. It rejects the assertion that symbolic forms of resistance tend to be 'apolitical' by arguing that these movements are often less likely to become co-opted and more likely to expose contemporary forms of conventional power than political

movements that are predominantly concerned with class. Therefore, these movements tend to identify the social base of New Social Movements in non-class terms that emphasize their distinctive nature rather than their political capacity.

Even though specific circumstances throughout Latin America vary a great deal, one constant within the region is a recognizable trend towards more democratic and transparent regimes during the past decade. One can argue the merits, motivations, and legitimacy of such a shift but must concede that regardless of these issues, the military regimes that once characterized the political landscape of the region are now becoming a thing of the past. Therefore, this political trend must be addressed since the majority of New Social Movements are primarily concerned with the issue of democracy. This has had a tremendous affect on various social movements that have operated for years on the assumption that increased democracy automatically implies inclusion. Mexico, once again, serves as an interesting example. The PAN electoral victory over the PRI in 2000 was supposed to signify the end to a corrupt national political system many citizens had taken for granted and usher in a new era of hope and prosperity the likes of which were considered virtually unimaginable only a few years earlier. But more than a year later, most of the issues that were prevalent prior to the election are still present and the gap between rich and poor continues to mount. This has convinced many New Social Movements to move away from the traditional 'democracy vs. dictatorship' polarity to a position where questioning and evaluating the quality of that democracy now that it has supposedly become a reality. No longer can a democratic state be considered the end result of a struggle for legitimate representation.

It has also become increasingly obvious that while the immediate goal of many New Social Movements may have been increase democracy and participation, there was

much more at stake than simply legitimate elections. Oxhorn (2001) reminds us that "the issue of human rights does not end once political repression ceases. It can only be transferred to the public agenda after elections are held through the deliberate, often problematic efforts by movements to make their concerns relevant in the context of democratic politics" (p.170). He argues that while one would think that it would be easier to address issues like human rights and poverty in the liberalized atmosphere of a democratic society, this has turned out, in most cases, to not be the case once democracy becomes clouded with issues of bureaucracy and protocol.

A primary reason for this inclination is that 'passing the democratic threshold' is only one aspect of the larger issue of political legitimacy. If those who constitute the new positions of power have it in their interest to maintain at least some semblance of the previous regime, even if they are legally elected by a majority, the issue of poverty has only markedly improved through the possibility of a public forum. The reaction of those public officials, and the citizenry at large, remains uncertain. As has become all too apparent in the West, representative democracy does not guarantee political and economic objectivity or equality. Therefore, Oxhorn concludes that "the problem is not so much Mexico's limited democracy in institutional terms but the kind of democracy that those institutions embody" (p.173). This would seem to be indicative of the region, and perhaps the globe, in general.

This argument is unique in many respects within social movement literature because it tends to focus upon the direct political influence many of these movements possess. Oxhorn's final analysis provides interesting conclusions for any urban focused inquiry despite the fact that his research was conducted upon peasant movements in Costa Rica because his emphasis on political economy sets him apart from many of his

contemporaries. I share his critique that the vast majority of social movement research focuses upon "the significance of discourse and identity politics at the expense of a more critical political-economy perspective that incorporates both class interests and the importance of the material needs of the poor" (p.174). While the value of discourse cannot be underscored, it tends to trivialize the continued struggle of the poor by situating most of the efforts to evaluate and determine poverty at the level of an elite academic debate. Identity politics is of value by indicating discrepancies in power between certain individuals and groups but can be as equally divisive in the process. Oxhorn believes "the challenge is to mediate differences in ways that allow for effective collective action...[that] involves focusing on the overlap of class and identity politics to avoid fragmentation and demobilization" (p.175). New Social Movements in Latin America and the people who study them, whether they are a rural peasant organizations in Costa Rica or a popular urban movement in Mexico, must address the political-economic consequences of their struggle. The level of discourse must extend beyond the post-modern propensity to oppose any logical discussion of poverty in realistic, quantitative terms by addressing basic class relations inherent to any oppressive system. In the end, identity politics proves insufficient for any discourse that endeavours to address structural issues of poverty and oppression at the level beyond the village commune or that of personal relationships.

Identity politics may result in certain material concessions for specific identifiable groups but they are usually at the expense of others unless society has sufficiently matured to a level of constitutionally guaranteed rights and privileges specific to their situation. The civil rights movement in the United States during the past fifty years is an obvious example. Proponents of this perspective are also strong

advocates of alliances with other like-minded organizations and groups to achieve their objectives. This is usually the case when obvious abuses are being committed upon a population by a government or insurgency group. These 'transnational advocacy networks' are most successful when public opinion throughout the world provides sufficient support for their specific agenda, most notably accomplished in the late eighties with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Therefore, while there are undeniable benefits to such alliances, these networks "are most effective in resolving problems whose causes can be assigned to the deliberate (intentional) actions of identifiable individuals in comparison with problems whose causes are irredeemably structural [because] where local actors are weak, such networks have little impact" (Oxhorn, p.178). They can certainly support "but cannot displace the central role played by domestic civil society in improving the quality of democratic governance" (ibid, p.179). The very success of these networks may go a long way in explaining the preoccupation most movements today seem to have with the state despite the recognition that inherent to their struggle are global structures which transcend the majority of those states, especially where peripheral nations are concerned.

One of the difficulties with establishing and maintaining these networks is that the majority of New Social Movements emerge out of local concerns about local issues even if they are inherently structural. In this respect it is often difficult for a local movement to develop a universal discourse so that it can communicate with other like-minded groups throughout the globe. In addition, these movements must constantly balance the issue of universalism. The primary concern is that they run the risk of becoming politically co-opted once they endeavour to become more universal in scope, with all the pitfalls that entails, but the possibility of establishing any trans-national

advocacy networks without developing a certain universal perspective is highly unlikely. Therefore, perhaps this is an area where NGOs can be of some assistance. As will be discussed further in the following sections, NGOs offer an extensive range contacts for movements throughout the globe and could facilitate the creation of these networks. One of the results of the current political environment in Mexico, and throughout Latin America, is that it has created an opportunity for NGOs to become proactive partners with many of these movements through funding and institutional support. A New Social Movement could become trans-national through its relationship with an NGO if that organization recognizes that it is in a position to facilitate that progression.

Accordingly, Oxhorn arrives at three interesting conclusions (p.180) about the realities of social movements in Latin America today. The first two are related to the state and are derivatives of the 'ambiguity of the state of democracy' in the region that has persisted for decades. To begin with, given the history of authoritarianism and the multiple levels and types of power that endure to this very day, the usual dichotomies of dictatorship-democracy, race-class, and the like do not serve as useful guidelines for comprehending the social and political realities of the region. Therefore, as was stated earlier, there seems to be a preoccupation with the state despite a structural shift towards globalization. A natural consequence of this preoccupation is that, almost unanimously, social movements in the region are associating their individual demands to the maintenance and improvement of political democracy within their given nation.

Most social movements become consumed by the state, and the state of democracy within it, primarily because they also share an important characteristic regardless of their motives or demands. The majority of New Social Movements are linked by a common desire to alter the definition of citizenship as defined by their given

society. Oxhorn describes this as 'the social construction of citizenship' that considers what it is to be a citizen as,

> "an inherently multidimensional concept involving legitimating norms and cultures, identities, and even the right to be different. Emerging conceptualizations of citizenship reflect the distribution of power within democratic systems but may lead to a redistribution of power in accordance with the outcome of specific struggles. Citizenship becomes a historically contingent concept whose breadth in terms of rights (individual and collective) results from the struggle and bargaining between expanding states and their subjects that created citizenship where it had not previously existed" (Oxhorn, p.181).

The challenge for the urban poor is to create a more inclusionary definition of citizenship, just as it would be for peasant organizations, human rights groups, or the women's movement. By expanding the rights of citizenship, New Social Movements create a space for their members and challenge the very societal norms everyone else has become accustomed to. This is the primary reason why groups committed to maintaining the status quo endeavour to restrict the access to full citizenry as diligently as New Social Movements endeavour to enlarge it.

This perspective, and an understanding of the ambiguity of democracy in the region, leads one to conclude that the limitations of democracy reflect the continued weakness of these movements, and civil society in general, to propel the issue of citizenship to the necessary levels of acceptance. Their failure to adequately articulate their demands perhaps underscores the inherent flaw of a state focused agenda. An ideal strategy may be to engender public support to the extent that trans-national advocacy networks would be of some use. A difficult task, but not impossible, when one considers the relative success of the civil rights and anti-apartheid movements of the past but accentuated by the fact that many of the comforts taken for granted in the West are indelibly tied to the subjugation of the periphery. The difference being urban poverty

today is primarily a global crisis while race relations in America and South Africa were predominantly a national embarrassment.

4.2 The Discrepancies with Liberal Democratic Capitalism

As previously discussed, liberal democratic capitalism represents the dominant philosophy of political economics in core nations and multilateral agencies throughout the globe. One could argue this is also the case for the periphery, the only contention being the nature of that commitment and whether it is the result of conviction or coercion. Regardless, most Latin American nations have embraced some manner of neo-liberalism, Cuba being the only exception, and Mexico is often heralded as a model to follow by many of its proponents for the swiftness and depth of its reforms. The debate surrounding its virtues is extensive and emotional. The purpose of this section is not to argue in support of a more Leftist agenda, but rather, to articulate some of the shortcomings of neo-liberalism, dispel a few of the myths, and demonstrate why it is generally not in the best interests of the urban poor or those New Social Movements that intend to advance their concerns.

There is little doubt that the debt crisis contributed to a new attitude in Latin America regarding economic and social policies. Hojman (1994) argues that a number of factors, from lessons learned from the crisis to favourable public opinion, resulted in a trend toward free market open economic policies throughout the region during the late eighties. Hojman, and others who supported these reforms- Corbo (1992), Voljc and Draaisma (1993), argue that not only was the Mexican experience a overwhelming success, but it should serve as a model for other transition economies to follow. Accordingly, these authors believe that the neo-liberal package of trade liberalization-cum-privatization has been largely responsible for the impressive record of stable

economic growth in Mexico and that it could provide a template for the economies of Eastern Europe to follow, which they believe are affected by many of the same structural problems (Richards, 1997). Each of these authors deems poverty as a derivative of failed economic policies, and therefore, the fact that they are compelled to reproduce the Mexican experience on a grand scale should substantiate the extent to which the reforms were successful, not only for the wealthy, but in creating a society characterized by reduced poverty and more equality. By all indications, this has not been the case.

The most contentious issue regards the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and renegotiations that immediately followed the crisis. It is apparent in hindsight that these agreements were, by and large, forced. Despite the international character of the crisis, articulated in previous sections by the OECD and others, peripheral nations were disproportionately affected. In order to qualify for desperately needed financial assistance, these nations were required to implement various reforms to their economies. They could have decided against the multilateral pressure to reform but would have risked isolation from the global market. As Richards (1997) concludes,

> "the circumstances...were such that the continued ability to function as a trading nation in the global economy required [peripheral nations] to come to some acceptable agreement with international lending institutions in order to gain access to necessary financial resources. The best that any nation could hope to do is negotiate the conditions of its ultimate submission to the IMF and US multinational banks" (Richards, p.22-23).

In most cases, these reforms were certainly not in the best interests of the nation but in the interests of the multilateral agencies, core nations, and the dominant members of the local capitalist class whose assets were generally protected by the flight of huge amounts of capital to safe havens in America and Europe. Consequently, there is little doubt that

the brunt of the adjustment process was unduly borne by those classes least capable of defending their interests.

The reaction to the debt crisis illustrates one of the most common fallacies of liberal democratic capitalism- that the existence of a 'free market' is the optimum means to maximize individual wealth. This may be the case for a small minority, but certainly not for all. The fallacy lies in the notion that the market is free of external influence. It should be apparent that the 'free market' has only a hypothetical existence since it relies upon the overwhelming power of a select few nations in order for it operate. These nations and their subsidiaries basically constitute the core industrialized countries and use the excuse of a 'free market' to ensure their interests, and the interests of capital in general, are protected. This is the primary reason why it is always necessary to attain certain financial requirements if one endeavours to even marginally influence the market. A free market within the liberal capitalist system has never been a valid means of identifying the real needs of individuals because it has no way of reacting to anyone who fails to meet the requirements of monetarism, those being the individuals with the necessary resources to draw attention to their problems. The adjustment programmes and renegotiations were constructed under guise of inclusion when, in reality, they represent an ideal example of the substantial division between the core and periphery and the extent to which the core is able to ensure that the periphery remains subservient.

The Mexican experience characterizes how widespread the reforms were, affecting not only the poor and marginalized, but a significant portion of the middle classes as well. As the rate of poverty increased, the devaluation of the peso resulted in considerable interest rate hikes that affected all facets of the economy. It led to dramatic increases in the variable mortgage rate, forcing many in the middle class to forfeit their

homes, and provoked a financial crisis that resulted in massive layoffs and the closure of numerous small and medium sized businesses. Barkin (1993) illustrates the massive consequence for the Mexican workforce- approximately 1.9 million people lost their job during the decade between 1982 and 1992 while only about one-million new jobs were created in the maquiladora plants, the auto and electronic industries, and in pharmaceuticals, the majority of which were of the minimum wage variety (p.139). Cypher (1993) corroborates this point by determining that in the manufacturing sector alone (excluding the maquilas) there were fourteen per cent fewer workers in 1992 than there were in 1980 and overall employment, including the maquilas, declined throughout the period because growth in the maquila sector failed to offset the decline of the national industrial base.

As government programmes were privatized, decentralized, or slashed altogether, tax reform amounted to a variety of new consumption taxes that failed to exclude even basic necessities such as food. The cumulative effect of these reforms had disastrous consequences for the poor and middle classes. As Richards (1997) argues, quite convincingly, they amounted to "sacrificing the conventional objective of income redistribution through taxation...the reforms had the effect of redistributing income from the poor to the wealthy" (p.33). This is confirmed by the dramatic increased proportion of wealth being concentrated at the apex of Mexican society and the gradual dissolution of the middle class. For the poorest twenty-nine percent of the labour force, wage income (purchasing power) declined by sixty-four percent between 1976 and 1992 and from 1988 to 1991, the wage share of national income fell from the already low level of twenty-six percent to just over twenty-four (Cypher, p.150). Once it was no longer only the poor and marginalized that were being affected, various protest movements in the

nation were given credence in the eyes of the PRI due to their increased political significance.

This resulted in the first serious challenge to their hegemony in over half a century and is the primary reason behind its delegitimization and the eventual succession to power of the PAN under Vincente Fox. Outrage over the reforms increased throughout the eighties and into the nineties, during which Carlos Salinas was elected president in 1988 amidst allegations of overt corruption even by Mexican standards. Richards argues that the repression of social movements, unions, and peasant organizations during this time were a direct result of the reforms. This, in turn, convinced many Mexicans that if they could not rid the state of its multilateral influence at least they could rid themselves of a corrupt national government that came to symbolize the state itself. The election of Ernesto Zidillo in 1994 did nothing to dissuade this as most Mexicans perceived it as yet another example of PRI tampering. The introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) during that year demonstrates the extent to which economics and politics are inextricably linked exhibited by the Zapatista struggle in Chiapas and other New Social Movements that mobilized throughout the country.

Gayarre (1994) views the reaction against the reforms, including ratification of NAFTA in 1994, as systematic of a larger issue. He concludes that,

> "If in the nineteenth century the workers' movement was the political answer of the working masses to the unjust distribution of wealth in the industrialized countries, the second half of the twentieth century saw the appearance of revolutionary movements opposed to a system that generated injustice, poverty, and misery in the peripheral countries" (Gayarre, p.43).

One of the consequences of NAFTA was an attempt to alleviate the impact of these movements by generating a confrontational attitude amongst the working class north of

the Rio Grande. To this end, American and Canadian labour has been constantly inundated by reports of impending job losses to Mexico where regulations are less restrictive and wages significantly cheaper. While this has certainly been the case, the focus has been unfairly placed upon Mexican labour as the problem rather than the structural conditions that precipitated this situation in the first place. Corporations that relocate due to favourable circumstances within a trading bloc do a disservice to workers on both sides of the border because agreements such as NAFTA are predicated on a contradiction of employment and real wages.

While most concede that industrial relocation to Mexico destroys jobs and depresses real earnings in Canada and the United States, this process is often undertaken largely at the expense of existing Mexican enterprises. This is accomplished through increased industrial concentration, the elimination of small and medium sized enterprises, and a virtual takeover of the nation's service industry through a system of corporate franchising. In addition, a tendency towards a reduction in real wages and employment in all three countries is inevitable as relocation undermines the bargaining power of collective organizations and contributes to a contraction of purchasing power by limiting the alternatives of disenfranchised workers.

The real challenge for social movements is to articulate this dichotomy in terms of the internationalization of capital at the expense of labour. The issue is not whether workers in Mexico are unfairly procuring employment at the expense of workers in the North, but rather, the nature of an agreement that places the demands of capital ahead of the interests of labour. Barkin (1993) recognizes the implications of such an attitude on social movements and labour unions alike intent on facilitating a conciliatory environment by emphasizing the importance of international solidarity. He argues that,

> "International solidarity is the motar used to build popular movements. Fraternal support and collaboration are required among potential allies; without proper channels for respectful discussion and analysis, inherited sentiments of inequality can transform an initial search for a common base for action into a hierarchical pattern of paternalistic domination" (Barkin, p.134).

One of the contributing factors to the lack of international solidarity has to do with the movements themselves. The greatest internal obstacle to collaboration is that rarely can localized movements communicate outside their specific focus. This can be characterized as 'movement chauvinism' in the sense that their language has been developed to such an extent that the only purpose it serves is to channel their energy towards their own specific agenda. Therefore, a feminist movement in Peru may have tremendous difficulty interacting and collaborating with a movement like the Assembly of Neighbourhoods in Mexico even though many of the structural issues that subjugate both are similar. This would seem to be the ideal situation for governments and multilateral agencies alike intent on establishing an environment conducive to investment and 'stability' rather than one predicated on the utilitarian virtues of inclusion and impartiality.

4.3 Can CEBs Play a Proactive Role within the Context of New Social Movements?

The continuing role of the Catholic church must also be addressed. Despite a noticeable trend towards secularism and the increasing threat of Protestantism, the Catholic church remains an active force within Mexican society. From a New Social Movement perspective, perhaps the church is still most visible within the context of CEBs but it must be noted that it continues to possess considerable influence throughout greater society as well. This should ensure that any discussion about the structural oppression of the urban poor will have to include a Catholic component. The role the church eventually plays, whether it be proactive in the form of Liberation Theology or

remain less visible, will have serious implications on the lives of those directly affected by poverty.

As far as CEBs are concerned, given the fact that the majority produce very little in terms of subsistence goods and operate according to a limited budget that relies heavily upon the benevolence of their already impoverished members, are they an effective response to poverty? MacNabb and Rees argue that they can play a proactive role through

> "the dynamics of democratic organization, of participation of women, and of analysis of the Mexican reality empower[ing] all members, especially women. They attempt to offset the devastating effects of Mexico's failing economy through educational programs and cooperatives" (MacNabb and Rees, p.743).

In this manner, they address poverty because

> "democratically organized base communities raise the consciousness, empower the poor, and challenge the political order. They can be seen as an example of new social movements that redefine meaning of concepts like struggle, community, gender, and identity" (MacNabb and Rees, p.743).

While this may be the case, like so many other small-scale, community minded organizations, they often fail to address the structural conditions that facilitate the very poverty they endeavour to alleviate. This is even more perplexing by the fact that they represent one of the few instruments through which liberation theology, and its theory of dependency, has been perpetuated throughout the region. Personal empowerment, community credit unions, and group discussions facilitate personal and spiritual progression but can only go so far as the limits of their geographical and social restrictions allow. This emphasis on community identity as the principle element in determining collective consciousness, rather than identities associated with class, is precisely the reason why CEBs, and other like-minded community focused New Social Movements, fail to take into account the larger issue of structural oppression.

Therefore, one negative characteristic of most CEBs is that they fail to address the issue of poverty with a global perspective. This is evident by the wide range of local issues that usually consume most base communities, by their strict focus on perpetuating Catholicism, and by the fact that so much discussion has gone into what exactly constitutes a Church Base Community in the first place. If Mexican CEBs, and others in the region, are serious about poverty alleviation, they must expand their focus outside the parameters of their community, province, and nation to issues of global oppression and state sponsored subjugation. As we have already seen with the cases of Oaxaca and Sao Bernardo, the coordination of various base communities within the surrounding area and local trade unions is occurring to limited extent at the provincial level. As the influence of liberation theology gradually dissipates, it may be necessary to expand their scope beyond their individual circumstances and perhaps create linkages with other, like-minded organizations that may not share their religious convictions or their commitment to advance them. Until then, Church Base Communities will only provide limited relief and spiritual comfort to those the possessing the religious enthusiasm to participate, while the structural conditions of their oppression, and the very nature of their poverty, continues unabated.

4.4 The Lessons from Mexico

There has already been a great deal of discussion about the current economic and political state of Mexico. An interesting component of the current environment is often the unintended consequences of a neo-liberal agenda. From a structuralist perspective, social stability is always of primary concern to the political elite because it insures that general unrest within the nation will remain at inconsequential levels. One of the most effective means the state has adopted to insure stability in the past was to co-opt various

insurgency groups once they achieved a recognizable level of distinction within the community to render them a serious threat to the status quo. This extremely successful tactic was based in large part on the fact that until quite recently New Social Movements were often faced, as Hellman articulated, with two equally unappealing alternatives; either to become co-opted by accepting various material concessions from the state or remain politically and economically isolated, at the risk of losing popular support, because in most cases those concessions are so desperately needed. The most important prerequisite for the state to maintain this advantage has always been that there were no other viable alternatives for New Social Movements to circumvent their authority.

New Social Movements in general, and particularly in Mexico, are in the unique position where that alternative now presents itself in the form of a burgeoning NGO sector and the continued retrenchment of the state as a result of various reforms brought about by a neo-liberal agenda. One of the central tenets of a conservative platform is a reduction in social service expenditures and the privatization of various government programmes in order to facilitate increased transparency and efficiency. This has created an environment where the supremacy of the state has been placed at risk because it no longer represents the only viable source of funding or support to New Social Movements. Therefore, the state's ability to co-opt through material concessions has been severely compromised. Instead, highly visible and extremely wealthy transnational NGOs have continued to fill the void left by the regression of the state. In the process, they have become major conduits of funds to New Social Movements and have enabled these movements to bypass the state in a manner that is unprecedented in Mexican history. Consequently, social stability is becoming increasingly difficult for the state to

maintain as many of these movements enjoy a measure of independence that was unimaginable only a few years earlier.

As Haber noted in his discussion of democracy, another obvious distinction many New Social Movements possess is that they tend to follow various national and international trends rather than instigating that process themselves. In this sense, they tend to be much more reactive than proactive. A major consequence of this propensity is that a major international discourse can have a tremendous effect upon the internal structure and direction of an individual movement. Increased independence from the state is often accompanied by a further reliance upon NGOs and an obligation to adhere to their specific stipulations. It seems that regardless of the relationship, New Social Movements will continue to be confronted by the possibility of having to abide by certain preconditions that may threaten their independent nature.

The irony lies in the relationship that often accompanies an increased reliance upon NGOs. While certainly creating a buffer zone between New Social Movements and the state, many large NGOs are not always the paragons of virtue they may seem. One would think that an independent source of funding would allow certain movements the necessary autonomy to advance and implement an alternative agenda but, in many cases, these organizations are major conduits of multilateral agency funds in their own right. Organizations such as the World Bank and the OECD frequently represent one of the primary sources financial assistance available to NGOs, not to mention their own individual governments. This can have an appreciable effect on their size, political stance, and organization. Despite the fact that many of these groups were themselves once rebelliously independent, an increased reliance upon multilateral funding suggests they run the risk of becoming co-opted by the very same institutions that endeavour to

undermine New Social Movements. Once this occurs, it can inevitably pass on to various movements through funding conditions which emanate from above. In this sense, NGOs become the inadvertent transmitters of a neo-liberal agenda by conforming to multilateral funding requirements.

Certainly NGOs offer an excellent alternative to many New Social Movements, one that I am sure is welcomed throughout the region, simply by changing the dynamic between the state and those movements it previously undermined. But it must be noted that there remains a certain amount of responsibility on their part to insure that these movements are supported on their own accord and not simply abandoned due to lack of vision, a more glamorous cause, or pressure from above. As the relevancy of the state continues to be called into question, NGOs assume an important role in ensuring that New Social Movements maintain their progressive identity within Mexican society by contributing various kinds of assistance. An equitable relationship must be fostered to ensure that these movements are not subject to the same type of paternalism more characteristic of government and multilateral tactics. This is a responsibility the NGO community should not take lightly. They must, at once, be cognisant of the manner in which they are involved with multilateral agencies and government institutions and be conscious of their role as a practical alternative to the state for many New Social Movements. The movements themselves must not rush hastily into a new relationship with an NGO simply because it offers a perceived independence without researching the conditions that may accompany it. There is no sense in avoiding state co-optation to simply be incorporated into the enormous machinery of the global political economic structure that the majority of these movements endeavour to circumvent in the first place.

4.5 Do New Social Movements Adequately Address Structural Oppression?

The fact that there are a number of movements representing a diversity of causes makes them relevant from a sociological perspective regardless of their political implications. Nonetheless, an important distinction should be made between those primarily concerned with the provision of services, which should not be considered movements in the literal sense, and structurally focused movements that do not endeavour to attain state power. While the realities of Latin American life dictate that the provision of certain fundamental services must be a concern of any serious social movement simply to appease various constituents by securing certain material gains, they cannot become the primary focus. As we have seen, once that occurs they often forfeit their original mandate, run the risk of becoming co-opted, and usually make it increasingly difficult on those movements committed to altering the fundamental causes of oppression and degradation. Accordingly, those movements that become motivated by the appeal of national politics tend to follow a similar pattern. While there are numerous examples of social movements that mature into political parties, the PRI included, too often than not they neglect the very constituents and ideals they were founded upon in a desperate attempt to broaden their political appeal.

The irrelevancy of the state in this regard is perhaps articulated best in an essay entitled 'Civil Democracy: Social Movements in Recent World History' by Andre Gunder Frank and Marta Fuentes published in 1990 in Samir Amin's *Transforming the Revolution*. Although the authors accept the relevancy of social movements as agents of democracy, they take issue with those that confuse it with national liberation. Their conclusion that "although most social movements are more defensive than offensive and tend to be temporary, they are perhaps the most important agents of social

transformation in that their praxis promotes participatory democracy in civil society" (p.142) is hardly unique but their assertion that the state system is inherently flawed deserves greater attention. Frank and Fuentes declare that "everywhere today, both in political reality and in popular perception, the state and party politics fall far- and apparently increasingly- short of addressing, let alone satisfying, popular liberty, equality, fraternity or solidarity (LEF/S, in terms of the French Revolution) concerns in civil society" (p.157). This statement is supported by the virtual incompatibility between social movements in general and the appeal of state power. The very notion of state power, and even political institutionalization, is founded upon principles that would negate much of the grassroots orientation and perhaps the very essence of most social movements in the process of transformation. The strict focus of most movements upon participatory democracy entails a conviction that it has been unjustly denied to them by the state or a number of its institutions. The result is a sense of self-determination that, by its very nature, seeks to create additional political space for itself or bypass the political process altogether. This is especially the case for small-scale, community based movements which is reinforced by the fact that their mandate and size prohibit them from the pursuit of national power but can also be the case for movements in the peripheries of society, obviously the majority, such as the women's movement or those advocating the collective rights of the poor simply because their objectives run counter to those of the established regime. In order to operate within the establishment one must first accept its legitimacy, something most social movements are unable to do if they endeavour to truly represent their constituents.

Therefore, not only is the pursuit of state power a defective approach but also any attempt to reify the government through legitimate efforts at collaboration. This can

be a major problem for many social movements, especially in Latin America where the pre-eminence of the state is often absolute despite structural flaws that inhibit its effectiveness. One primary reason for this tendency has been the perceived failure of reformist left-wing parties to offer a viable alternative to individuals seeking societal change. Many of those that once expressed a belief in their motives refocused their energy towards a variety of social movements without completely dissolving themselves of their national ambitions. Frank and Fuentes attribute this to the autonomous nature of most movements and their desire to influence anything of consequence. They conclude that,

> "Despite, or indeed perhaps because of, their autonomous self-empowerment, many social movements nonetheless seek to influence or change the management and actions of the state, government, party, and other established institutions. Many single and also multiple issue movements seek to exercise social or political pressure on the executive or legislative power to accede to or implement movement demands" (Frank and Fuentes, p.164).

Usually with only limited results and negative consequences since this requires a reciprocal relationship between these movements and the particular political party they most commonly identify with, which threatens their organizational identity and often the constituency they represent.

Evers (1985) considers it completely natural for a relationship to develop between New Social Movements and the state even if it is generally unequal and usually not in the best interests of the particular movement. He suggests that "to rescue society from politics is in itself a political task and needs political power to advance. And expressed more starkly, everyday life for most of these groupings is marked by political oppression and economic misery, and every bit of political potential is bitterly needed

for survival" (p.64). Therefore, he argues that some measure of collaboration with the state is almost a necessity regardless of the socio-cultural implications. He asserts that,

> "Social movements cannot exist without political expression, which has to articulate the aims of the movement with the existing alienated- and alienating-power structures. In terms of alienation vs. identity, the political expression of social movements is, thus, a necessary retrospective part of its existence" (Evers, p.65).

This is despite his conclusion that "a movement's increased potential for political power can carry with it a decrease in its long-term socio-cultural potential. More power means, almost invariably, less identity, more alienation" (ibid, p.65). Given this quandary, is it reasonable to believe that there is a possibility for this almost inevitable situation to be avoided?

Since New Social Movements are characterized by sustained mobilization and a degree of persistence, it certainly seems unreasonable to expect any social movement to remain completely isolated from the political structures of power. In fact, one could argue that this is a major distinction that separates them from mere acts of protest. That being said, it is quite another thing to actively pursue a political agenda at the expense of its own legitimacy. Once a New Social Movement becomes primarily concerned with the pursuit of power it ceases to exist as a movement, acquiring many of the features of a party, by sacrificing its initial principles for a broader constituency. Movements must accept that their ambitions and activities will be co-opted to some extent by an eventual relationship with the state, voluntary or otherwise, once they become powerful enough to attract its attention. The key is not to become convinced that their mission can be accomplished through their own independent political motivations. A limited relationship with the state is a natural consequence of a movement's growth and maturation. What is important is to not lose sight of the larger issues of structural

oppression and global imbalances which precipitated their mobilization in the first place. Any success at the state level, political or otherwise, will not address this fundamental defect regardless of how powerful a movement has become. One only needs to recall how the administrations of Allende and Ortega were eventually vanquished for convincing.

Therefore, the pursuit of state power is unrealistic on two fronts; it is incapable of transforming the social reality of an internationally oppressive situation and will most likely neglect those individuals who originally supported it. Frank and Fuentes articulate this dilemma in terms of two diametrically opposed camps. Since the state cannot act as either the purveyor or guarantor of LEF/S,

> "all the less necessary and sufficient [is the] pursuit of state power, revolution, and liberation through their supposedly instrumental political parties. All the most significant and ubiquitous, instead or at least in addition, became new social movements to address popular LEF/S concerns...Today, all around the world a myriad of non-political party social movements are mobilizing people in pursuit of LEF/S demands that transcend and mostly do not even include state power and revolution" (Frank and Fuentes, p.141-42).

Given that the limitations of the state are well documented, social movements become socio-politically relevant regardless of their respective rates of LEF/S success. This is the case because,

> "these other social movements express and effect popular demands for LEF/S more directly than moving indirectly by way of capturing or exercising state power through political parties [since] experience demonstrates that...state power is not necessarily the necessary or sufficient intermediary step to promote, much less to guarantee, a whole series of social LEF/S demands" (Frank and Fuentes, p.158).

Therefore, the fact that they remain independent further legitimizes their cause.

So, it would seem, very few social movements are truly anti-systemic in their attempts even if their motives challenge the structures of power or one its institutions. It

is a valid argument that although only a minority become truly institutionalized in the sense that they become incorporated directly into the system, it is more common for their demands to become more widely accepted through some measure of incorporation on their own. This has been described as the unintended effects of a movement that perceived itself as anti-systemic, but only in its motives, not its actions. These effects "are incorporated if not co-opted by the system, which ends up being invigorated and reinforced by social movements, which were formally anti-systemic but did not turn out to be" (Frank and Fuentes, p.167). This has been the historical consequence of many movements that may profess structural concerns but end up having their more mainstream demands incorporated directly into system itself, rending any remainder as radical and extraneous. Whether these movements can claim some measure of success is dependent upon their perspective. Although the system and inherent structures that accompany it remain in tact, it has been altered, however slightly, by the resolute persistence, and eventual acceptance, of at least a portion of their demands. Those with a positive outlook will consider this a small victory while others will maintain that it is the epitome of co-optation. The fact that the system remains virtually in tact, with only minor alterations, and the structural conditions of poverty persist should convince the majority to side with the latter regardless if certain rudimental changes have occurred.

The structural oppression of peripheral regions will continue unabated unless poverty is considered a global phenomenon whose solution requires the reorganization of international relations and a serious review of the fundamental principles of liberal democratic capitalism. New Social Movements can contribute to this cause by continuing to address the inadequacies of the current system by refusing to accept minor concessions that, inevitably, only perpetuate the status quo. Unless they consider urban

poverty as a derivative of the structural oppression of peripheral regions within the global system, they will be unable to properly articulate their demands for a more just and equitable society.

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