

“O paga o se muere”: The Salvadoran Healthcare Workers’ Strike against Healthcare Privatization and its Impact on Democracy”

By
Jill Kathleen Murphy

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Approved: Dr. Lisa Kowalchuk, Advisor
Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
University of Guelph
Adjunct Professor, Department of IDS, Saint
Mary’s University

Approved: Prof. John Devlin, First Reader
School of Environmental Design and Rural
Development, University of Guelph
Adjunct Professor, Department of IDS, Saint
Mary’s University

Approved: Dr. Anthony Winson, External Reader
Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
University of Guelph

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Abstract

Access to essential social services such as healthcare is an important element of development, and is often elusive for the majority of people in developing countries. Further, the move towards privatization models in many countries poses an increased threat to access, particularly for the poor. In El Salvador, the privatization of healthcare was approached by the government with little transparency and civic consultation. The social movement response, a nine-month strike by doctors and healthcare workers against privatization, showed social movements as forces not only opposing privatization, but also as creating a more open and transparent process of debate and engagement. The ability of social movements to act as democratizing forces is explored in the context of the Salvadoran social movement against healthcare privatization, showing a definite but limited ability to democratize in the short-term.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The neo-liberal model of development has been present in much of the developing world since the end of the Cold War. This model is marked by economic programs which open countries to foreign trade and investment and promote private enterprise. The neo-liberal model is also accompanied by the prioritization of liberal democratic governance, characterized by universal suffrage for adults, free elections and majority rule. Under this model, however, poverty has not been eradicated; in fact it has often increased. Just as neo-liberal economic policy has largely failed to decrease poverty, it can be argued that the current level of democracy in most of the world, while ensuring access to the polls for citizens and rule of law, has not resulted in the additional gains of equitable distribution of resources or of extended political rights. The dominant system of neo-liberal economic policy, in conjunction with liberal democracy, is based on ideology that has not been accepted by the many people who are either living under conditions of immiseration or who strongly object to the existence of such conditions in a resource-rich world. As it is important to study the causes of this continued poverty and marginalisation, it is also important to examine what people are doing to maintain or regain power over their own lives. Social movements, organizing on national and international levels, are demonstrating their objection to the continued existence of this neo-liberal model. They are refusing to participate in a system that has increased levels of poverty and inequality on national and global levels and are insisting that the people have a stake in the implementation of policies that affect their lives.

Social movements have the ability to insist that people are involved in the development process and to influence policies that affect the majority of people.

Additionally, they may have been capable of promoting a type of democracy that goes beyond the limited liberal democratic model. Just as many scholars and practitioners have recognized the failure of neo-liberalism as an approach to development, social movements are actively rejecting policies and practices that simply do not work. And just as the neo-liberal economic model has run its course, many people are recognizing that a limited form of liberal democracy was appropriate in times of transition from autocracy, but that it could be strengthened and renewed in order to bring more benefits to citizens. Social movements, their actions and their outcomes, therefore, are important in the ongoing process of development as they represent an active body of citizens that have are able not only to influence policy, but to push for changes to hegemonic structures that have proved unsuitable in terms of the eradication of poverty and inequality. By drawing on the case of the Salvadoran social movement against the privatization of healthcare, the ability of social movements to create changes that may add to the process of democratization will be explored. I will examine, by looking at the extent to which they challenge policies that are part of a hegemonic model, their ability to also contribute to structural changes. I will argue that social movements are able to increase democratization in societies where democracy is limited and exists only in the formal procedural sense. By engaging in informal political participation and insisting on citizen participation in policy making, by opposing policies that are likely to perpetuate socio-economic inequality and by bringing these issues into the public discourse through the mainstream media, social movements can act as democratizing forces. I will analyse the outcomes of the Salvadoran movement and will explore them in terms of democratic strengthening.

Theoretical Perspectives

Much of the recent literature on social movement outcomes recognizes that movements have a democratizing ability (Huntington. and Nelson: 1976; Touraine: 1997; Koopman: 2004). There is a growing recognition in the literature of the need to explore the role of social movements as democratizing forces in societies that are currently considered to be democratic (Guigni, McAdam and Tilly: 1999). Drawing on this relatively recent academic interest in social movements, democratization and structural change in existing democracies, this thesis will examine the extent to which social movements, in their opposition to neo-liberal policies such as privatization, can strengthen the conditions of democracy.

In addition to the literature on social movements and their outcomes, a review of literature on democracy and democratization will help to establish that the current liberal procedural model of democracy is insufficient. The literature will help to argue that democracy requires a number of elements in order to have relevance to the majority of people in so-called democratic societies. Primarily, it must involve space for political participation that is universal, open and allows for a significant voice for opposition. This requires political participation that is not limited to procedural processes such as voting, and which involves the voice of citizens in the policy-making process. Additionally, political participation must be permitted to occur as an interaction between citizens and their polity without excessive interference by foreign governments or institutions. Furthermore, democracy must involve a more equitable distribution of resources; it has little substance in circumstances where an elite minority controls resources and where the majority lives in extreme poverty.

The relationship between democracy and access to information that reflects the opinion of the opposition will also be explored by examining the use of the mainstream media by the Salvadoran anti-privatization movement. The media will be examined, for the purpose of this case study, as a location of public space where social movements took action and interacted with authorities. The ability of the movement to raise public awareness and debate surrounding the issue of privatization, among the citizenry and politicians, will be examined. The way in which the strike was played out in the media is an important indication of the way social movement goals and actions are presented to the public and of the use by the social movements of the media. The extent to which the movement used their media work to increase public awareness and debate will be linked to their impact on democracy.

Outline of the Case Study

In 2002- 2003, Salvadoran doctors' and healthcare workers' unions, with the support of numerous social movement organizations, launched a strike against the privatization of the social security healthcare system in El Salvador (ISSS). The strike lasted nine months, and resulted in the Republican National Alliance (ARENA) government backing down from their plans to privatize the healthcare system. The strike also resulted in the formation of the National Commission for the Monitoring of Integrated Health Reform, with members from government, business and, importantly, civil society. The commission was formed with the intention of working on a strategy for healthcare reform that addresses the inadequacies of the current three-tiered system and to build a reform alternative that may not involve privatization. While the victory of the 2002- 2003 strike was impressive, the struggle against healthcare privatization is sure to

endure under the government of President Elias Antonio Saca and the right-wing ARENA party. The concern of this thesis, however, is with the implications of the 2002-2003 strike for democratization in El Salvador. The strikers and their supporters, following a decade of movement activity surrounding the healthcare issue, achieved immediate gains in terms of policy. Additionally, the research carried out for this thesis indicates that their impact on political participation, their opposition to perpetuated socio-economic inequality and their ability to raise public awareness surrounding the issue meant that they contributed democratically in the short term and were able to move towards structural change in the context of a limited procedural democracy and a strong neo-liberal influence. The research also indicates, however, that the nature of the government and elite structure in El Salvador presented numerous barriers to the full realization of democratic strengthening, and that despite the achievements and short term gains of the movement, that the process of democratic strengthening is long and often difficult.

The case of the Salvadoran doctors' and health workers' movement is important in terms of the study of social movements in a number of ways. The movement is an example of a relentless effort by numerous sectors against a policy prescription that is representative of a greater hegemonic structure. Privatization of social services, rampant across Latin America in the last two decades, is the result of neo-liberal conceptions of what development should entail. The social movement in El Salvador represents the popular response to policies that come "from above" and a refusal to participate complacently in the reduction of the state vis-à-vis social services. It represents an insistence by several sectors of society and thousands of individual citizens that people be

involved in policy decisions that affect their lives; it demonstrates a rejection by these groups of the harmful policies that they believe, based on experience, will be detrimental.

The Salvadoran movement against healthcare privatization is also significant due its wide range of participants. The initiation of the strike by doctors is atypical and very important. While social movements are active across Latin America, it is not common that a group that is representative of the middle class lead them. The doctors' participation in the strike made it obvious that the rejection of neo-liberal policy comes from almost all sectors of society, and that these sectors are willing to take a significant risk to protest policies such as privatization.

In addition to the doctors and healthcare workers that went on strike, the movement was composed of and supported by representatives from many sectors. Supporters included peasant organizations, women's organizations, other workers' organizations, market vendors, student groups and other citizens. Diversity in the types of participants was reflected in the breadth of different protest tactics the movement used and the location of the protests. This reveals the broad opposition to privatization that resulted in a national social movement. The Salvadoran movement against healthcare privatization is therefore very relevant to the study of social movements, their outcomes, and democratization.

The research for this thesis consisted of a thorough content analysis of newspaper coverage and paid announcements used by the strikers and their supporters in a major mainstream newspaper (*La Prensa Grafica*), of interviews, which took place in San Salvador, El Salvador, in July and August 2004. Additionally, I used reports from civil society organizations and the office of the human rights ombudsperson on the healthcare

situation in El Salvador for the purpose of the case study. The content analysis, interviews and reports allowed for triangulation of research to properly inform the study.

Chapter Outline

The following chapter will outline the major debates in the literature on social movements, their outcomes, their relationship to the media and democratization. It will also outline the debates on the definition of democracy, and will establish the need to expand its definition to include criteria that go beyond the current procedural manifestation. Through the discussion of democracy I will also examine the role of the media and public awareness in expanding democracy in countries where procedural democracies exist.

Chapter Three will provide the background for the case study. It will outline the history of the healthcare conflict in El Salvador, and will discuss the experience of previous privatizations, such as that of electricity, as a means of establishing the effects of such policies in the country. A chronology of the 2002- 2003 strike will also be given, paying attention to major events, actions and negotiations between the strikers and government. A brief discussion of the media situation in El Salvador will also help to add to the discussion of the media and democratization. Chapter Four will discuss the methodological aspect of the research in more depth.

The fifth chapter will contain the analysis of the interview data and the content analysis of the articles and paid announcements, and will outline the findings of the research. The final chapter will contain a discussion of the findings and will situate the research in the context of development and social movement's impacts on democratization.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature- Social Movement Outcomes and Democracy

In this review of literature I will examine what has been written by scholars of social movements about their impacts and their potential to contribute to democracy and broad structural change. I will also explore the various dimensions and definitions of democracy by drawing from the extensive literature on the concept, with particular attention to aspects of participation, socio-economic equity and the public awareness and debate of contentious issues. The overview of these two broad types of literature will help establish the relationship between social movements and the potential expansion of democracy in countries in which procedural democracy exists, but in which the broader benefits associated with democratic political systems are lacking. Social movement literature will be reviewed, with particular attention to the issue of movement outcomes, a field of study that is increasingly recognised as important. Literature on democracy and democratization will be reviewed with attention paid to three democratic concepts mentioned above as elements through which social movements may make a contribution to democracy. The relationships between social movements and democracy, and the issues and questions raised in the literature will then be applied, in later chapters, to the case of the Salvadoran movement against the privatization of healthcare.

Defining Social Movements and their Actions

Charles Tilly defines a social movement as “a sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders, by means of repeated public displays of that population’s worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment” (Tilly in Guigni, McAdam and Tilly: 1999, 256). He argues that a constant in all movements is that they involve a continuous interaction between challengers and

power holders. His definition is useful as it calls attention to an important although seemingly obvious aspect of social movements; social movements do not exist without the interactions between a collective body and the structure of power it is contesting. While all social movements cannot be considered popular movements, Minor Sinclair (1995) argues that the main element of a popular movement is that “popular” refers to the lower working class, who also make up the majority of the population in developing countries such as El Salvador. He also indicates that these movements can include people who are not poor but who identify with marginalized people. He states that “popular” signifies a democratic process in that it refers to the people. It is important to recognize that popular movements can be composed of people who do not necessarily represent the poor or marginalized; many movements are composed of middle class people, but can still be seen as popular in that they are fighting for popular rights. Both Tilly and Sinclair’s definitions are important, as they involve fundamental concepts that are central to the study of social movements: power and citizenship. These concepts are crucial for a discussion of social movements and their potential for structural change and democratization, as democratization and change require both a shift in power within a polity and the recognition of certain rights of citizenship which may be lacking under less democratic systems.

This thesis is about a movement involving a strike by unionized workers against an issues, the privatization of healthcare, which is a broader social issue. Charlotte Ryan (2004) offers a definition of social movement unionism that is of interest for this thesis. She cites a definition provided by Moody:

In social movement unionism neither the unions nor their members are passive in any sense. Unions take an active lead in the streets, as well as in politics. They ally with other social movements, but provide a class vision and content... That content is not simply the demands of the movements, but the activation of the mass of union members as leaders... Social movement unionism implies an active strategic orientation (Moody, *in* Ryan: 2004, 488).

This definition reflects the broad range of union activism and mobilization, as well as the relationship of unions with other social movement groups. Additionally, it reflects the goals of social movement unions as reaching beyond labour issues and of having a broader social concern. This raises questions of the ways in which unions may interact with other movement groups and of the difference, in terms of outcomes, between union movements and other types of movements. Moody's definition of social movement unionism certainly adds to the previous definitions by Tilly and Sinclair. Primarily, unions would seem to have great potential in terms of Tilly's "worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment" as they are a strong, previously-organized type of movement with a seemingly great potential to have leverage with power holders. They may have a somewhat privileged position as, by their very nature, they are made up of the employed, and their ability to strike means that they have leverage that would perhaps not be held to the same extent by other movement groups. This also relates to Sinclair's definition of popular movements and his important point, drawn out above, of movements being made up, at times, of those who act in support of the poor or marginalised rather than, or in addition to, the poorest and most excluded themselves. While workers in developing countries may not be rich, or even middle class, unionized, formal workers represent a group which is farther from the margins than the groups they might be acting in support of.

A discussion of definitions of social movements naturally leads to the exploration of what it is that social movements do. Both Piven and Cloward (1977) and Tarrow (1989) offer useful definitions of protest as the major tool used by social movements. Piven and Cloward argue that ‘protest’ entails a change of both consciousness and of behaviour among those that become active in social movements. They argue that, initially, there is a shift in consciousness wherein “the system” loses legitimacy, and is seen as unjust and wrong. This loss of legitimacy may result in the people beginning to exert what they perceive to be “rights” and to demand change. That is, the authors argue, in order for active protest to result out of deprivation, people must believe that they are subject to unfair and wrong actions that can and should be changed. Additionally, people begin to believe that they have the capacity for making change. Secondly, there is a shift in behaviour, at which time people begin to defy hegemony and to organize collectively. (Piven and Cloward: 1977, 3-4, 12). Consequently, they argue, action and defiance can be considered part of “movement action” when those involved share both a group association and common grievances or “protest beliefs” (Piven and Cloward, 4). Piven and Cloward also argue, importantly, that institutional disruption plays a key role in social movement success and that social movement action cannot be divorced from the political realm. This again raises questions of the possible leverage of unions that form part of broader social movements. These important aspects of their argument will be revisited below.

In his discussion of protest and social movements, Sidney Tarrow (1989) attempts to answer three questions regarding social movement struggle: *how* people struggle, *who* engages in struggle and *why* people struggle. Primarily, he argues that people struggle by

drawing upon their “disruptive potential”, that is, they use their resources to decrease the control of the state or other institutions over certain situations that relate to the locus of the struggle. Secondly, he argues that protest, or struggle, is made up of “organized groups operat[ing] within mass movements around symbols of collective goals” (Tarrow: 1989, 3). Finally, he states that people struggle both to change or to influence specific policies and to reorder larger structures.

Tarrow also gives a useful definition of protest. He defines it as: “disruptive collective action that is aimed at institutions, elites, authorities, or other groups on behalf of the collective goals of the actors or of those they claim to represent” (Tarrow: 1989, 11). It is obvious then, that much like Piven and Cloward, Tarrow sees the disruptive ability of social movements as a crucial aspect of their activities and of their likelihood for success.

The definitions of social movements and brief discussion of their actions in this section will help to add to an understanding of social movement outcomes, the focus of analysis in this thesis. The following section will expand on the literature on social movement outcomes and will lead into the discussion of expanded definitions of democracy and social movement ability to contribute to the process of democratization.

Exploring Social Movement Outcomes

The issue of measuring social movement outcomes, as opposed to describing the internal workings of movements and their tactics, is becoming more frequently studied, and has been recognized as a field that demands increased attention. Guigni, McAdam and Tilly (1999), provide a useful overview of the questions involved in this relatively new area of social movement studies. They outline the two major debates in the field, that

of disruptive vs. moderate conditions and internal vs. external conditions that influence movement outcomes. The former seeks to determine whether moderate or violent action is more effective in reaching social movement goals, while the latter asks whether external factors or internal social movement structures determine the success of the movements. The issue of external factor influence, such as the political-economic context within which a movement is working, is important and will be revisited below.

Tilly et al (1999) raise other important issues surrounding the analysis of social movement outcomes. They suggest the existence of an interesting paradox in social movement success: that pushing for short- term change has a better chance of success but does not change the structures of power that create the problems in the first place. Demanding structural or institutional change, however, has less chance of success. This raises the issue of the subjective and fluid nature of success, which is important when looking at different dimensions of movement outcomes. It raises the question of whether movements can be considered successful when they make an achievement in one area, or within a certain time frame, but not in another.

William Gamson (1974, 1990) discusses the issue of short-term vs. long- term outcomes more extensively. Through his analysis of numerous historical American social movements, Gamson explores the potential for success of groups whose goals varied in complexity and in the degree to which they challenged broader structures of power. He cites Roberta Ash (1972) who argues that “smaller” demands are more likely to meet with success. She states that:

All movements must make a series of choices: Between single issue demands and multiple issue demands, between radical demands and demands that do not attack the legitimacy of present distributions of wealth and power, and between influencing elites

(or even incorporating movement members into the elite) and attempting to replace elites (Ash, in Gamson: 1990, 41).

Gamson draws upon these choices as he attempts to compare the success of groups that “aim to displace one or more antagonist” with those that “merely wanted to change its policies or organization in some way”. This analysis is useful in terms of thinking about successes and groups that aim to create structural change. These questions, raised by Gamson, will be applied to the analysis for this case study. The analysis for this thesis will incorporate the question asked above, drawn from Tarrow, of the fluidity of success. Tarrow’s question raises important questions of social movement outcomes and of ‘success’ and of ‘failure’, that is, can it be said that a movement has failed when it has only achieved some of its goals? Conversely, can a movement be considered ‘successful’ if its outcomes were small or unintended? These questions will be applied to the case study. In his discussion of the impact of social movements with more ambitious goals, which also brings up the ambiguities of multiple issue vs. single issue groups and of groups that may or may not be defined as ‘radical’, Gamson does not conclude, necessarily, that groups with “smaller” goals have a better chance of success. He concludes that the real challenge to success comes when groups attempt to displace their antagonist. That is, removal of an antagonist from its position of power is a more unattainable goal for movements (Gamson, 49).

It is important to view social movements and their activities not as an isolated incident with a certain policy outcome, but as part of a larger process with both direct and broader implications and to explore the question of social movements and their ability to achieve structural change. Guigni (1998) provides a very useful discussion on the issue of

social movement success. He begins by discussing certain problems that he sees as engrained in the study of social movement outcomes. Primarily, he asks the question of how to establish "... a causal relationship between a series of events that we can reasonably classify as social movement actions and an observed change in society, be it minor or fundamental, durable or temporary" (Guigni, 1998: 373). He suggests that the methodological problems of linking social movement outcomes with societal change can only be resolved through an expansion in the current theory on the issue. He further states that many scholars of social movements agree upon the neglect of the study of the effects of social movements in general. He states, however, that: "... a striking disparity exists between the large body of work on political and policy outcomes and the sporadic studies on the cultural and institutional effects of social movements" (Guigni, 1998: 373).

Despite this disparity he does give an overview of the existing literature on structural change thus far. He cites, for example, Rochon and Mazmanian's (1993) three arenas of movement success: 1) policy change, 2) changes in the policy process and 3) changes in the social values (Rochon and Mazmanian, 1993, in Guigni: 383-384). Additionally, he states that several authors have conceived of social movement success in terms of their ability to create structural effects. In doing so, he states, they "thus acknowledg[ed] that movements can provoke alterations in the institutional arrangements of society" (Guigni, 1998: 384). He further discusses, however, the lack of research on how certain movement impacts can bring about this type of change, and states the necessity of examining both the short and long term consequences of social movements. He helps to clarify the need to go beyond looking at only policy impact to examining cultural and structural change (Guigni, 1998: 386).

Rochon and Mazmanian's three arenas of success, as cited by Guigni, seem particularly useful for the analysis of social movement success as they include "changes in the policy process" as one arena of success existing between policy and structural changes. The ability to influence the *processes* of policy-making seems to be an important means not only of influencing structures of power but also in terms of increasing democratic participation. In fact, Guigni, in his introduction to another volume (1998), expands on Rochon and Mazmanian's types of change in this discussion of movement potential for structural change. They identify incorporation, transformation and democratization as three dimensions of movement outcomes. 'Incorporation' refers to a social movement becoming a part of the structure that it may have originally been trying to change. This may occur when a social movement becomes a political party, for example. 'Transformation' refers to direct policy impacts by social movements. For example, by directly changing a government policy, social movements may have a transformative role. Finally, 'democratization' further involves a social movement's impact on structures, such as policy processes. A social movement may act in a transformative capacity by changing an existing policy. That same social movement may also have a democratizing role when it is able to change or influence the *process* by which the policy is changed, or the structure of the very system that makes the policy. This type of change is of particular interest.

One important factor influencing social movement outcomes, which seems thus far to be rarely explored as a major factor, is the impact of forces that are external to the national polity or elite. This seems a crucial dimension to explore in the context of privatization of social services such as health care in developing countries, and the related

influence of the United States and international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the other institutions. While many writing on social movement theory do not address the issue of external factors as major variables, the importance seems worth exploring and has been alluded to by some authors. In his article on protest against debt in Latin America, John Walton discusses this issue using examples of several instances across Latin America as a means of demonstrating that protestors against debt and austerity measures have a structural understanding of the issues against which they are protesting. He argues that: "A case for fundamental change requires a deeper reading of these events- one that shifts from question about the causes, forms and direct effects of protest to an interpretation of connection between social unrest, the state and the international system" (Walton *in* Eckstein: 2001, 322). Here, then, he displays the importance not only of examining the relationship between social movements and the state, but also between social movements, the state and international forces. This type of analysis could have important implications for the connections between social movements' challenge to neo-liberal hegemony and their ability to expand democracy and development. It also has implications for the discussion of social movements' abilities to instigate structural change. This suggests, for the approach to research and study of social movements protesting social service privatization, that the national state may not be the only power holder that is interacting with the movement.

Social Movement Tactics and their Potential for Success

Important to the question of whether social movements can impact democracy and create structural change is a discussion of how movements might achieve these

outcomes. Guigni discusses the focus on disruption and violence as a means of achieving social movement success as an area that has received a great deal of attention. He cites Gamson's work on this topic and his findings that "...the use of violence and, more generally, disruptive tactics... was positively correlated to his two measures of success: the acceptance of challengers as legitimate claimants and the obtaining of new advantages for constituents" (Guigni, 376). Guigni says that much of the evidence for the relationship between disruptive tactics and social movement impact comes from research on strikes and on the urban riots in the United States in the 1960s. He states that the strike-based studies largely brought forth contradictory evidence regarding the success of violent tactics. The discussion of the contribution of disruptive tactics begs the question of what is considered to be disruptive. While violence is an obvious form of disruption, one can also argue that strikes are, by nature, disruptive. The refusal to work, picketing outside of buildings and other strike-related tactics could surely be seen as disruptive. Piven and Cloward are proponents of the "disruption" side of the debate. They argue that: "the most useful way to think about the effectiveness of protest is to examine the disruptive effects in institutions of different forms of mass defiance, and then to examine the political reverberations of those disruptions" (Piven and Cloward, 24). They argue that protest is more likely to disrupt, and more likely to be successful, when protesters are integral to an institution. They argue that institutions are disrupted when people refuse to participate in their usual and expected role. They further maintain that a "negative sanction", or the refusal to participate or act in some expected way, is "a natural resource for exerting power over other" (Piven and Cloward, 26). Piven and Cloward also state that instead of the actual disruption being indicative of the power gained by those

protesting, that the derivative *political* impacts can be seen as the real measure of success (Piven and Cloward, 1978: 27). This relates clearly to the earlier discussion of Ryan's definition of social movement unionism and the question of unions having a degree of leverage vis á vis power holders.

Finally, Tarrow seems to agree with Piven and Cloward about the role of protest as a tool for social movement success. He argues that: "The power of protest...lies neither in its numbers nor its level of violence, but in its threat to burst through the boundaries of the accepted limits of social behaviour..." (Tarrow: 1989, 7). He argues that this is particularly important for social movements, that have protest as one of their only terms for expressing demands. He also raises the issue of the dependence of social movements on disruptive tactics, such as mass protest, for success. He argues that: "The paradox is that collective actors who have only disruptive collective action as a resource, by their very actions bring it within the conventional repertoire and thus deprive themselves of its power" (Tarrow, 7). Therefore, he suggests, in order to succeed, social movements must continually reinvent themselves in order to maintain their disruptive and unconventional potential for success.

Social Movements as Democratizing Forces: Expanding Democracy

An outline of the literature on social movements, their potential outcomes and their relationship with the media has led to the suggestion that social movements have the potential to create structural changes. These changes could be said to impact the nature, or quality, of democracy. Guigni, as discussed above, indicates incorporation, transformation and democratization as three levels of change that may be achieved by social movements. He calls the exploration of social movements and democratization

“...a surprisingly poorly studied outcome in the light of the assertion...that movements are powerful sources of democracy” (Guigni, 1998, xii). It seems that much of what is written on social movements and the potential for democratization has focussed on social movements in the context of societal transition from autocracy to democracy. Social movements may, however, possess a continuous democratizing potential and have the capacity to strengthen existing procedural democracies and to challenge societies that claim to be democratic despite numerous failures in terms of citizenship rights.

Giugni defines the process of democratization as “... when a transfer of power couples with a modification of the mutual rights and obligations between the state and its citizens” (Giugni, 1998: xv). He also argues that in order for social movements to contribute to democratization, they must affect at least one of the four elements of democracy which he defines as: “1) broad citizenship; 2) relatively equal citizenship; 3) binding consultation of citizens to state policies and personnel; 4) protection of citizens, especially members of minorities, from arbitrary state action” (Guigni, 1998: xx).

Sandoval also suggests that social movement outcomes can be placed into three categories- social movement, or internal, outcomes, policy legislation outcomes and structural outcomes. He identifies structural outcomes as changes in the political structure. He also suggests that there are three ways in which social movements can influence democratization: “when social movements defending citizenship rights explicitly demand and gain the extension of one or more of the four elements of democracy [as outlined above]”; “when movements cause an increase in participation in contentious politics”; and “when social movements introduce into the political arena proactive demands challenging the prerogatives of powerholders and their sustaining

elites through direct confrontation of a sort seldom advocated by the more institutionalized opposition elites”. (Sandoval, 1998: 173).

Melucci and Lyyra (1998) argue that social movements have democratic potential, both by assuring that public space for collective action exists in and of itself, and by creating a debate and making claims surrounding new “rights” that may affect the whole population. They state that: “...rights themselves appear now to represent both the forms and the content of democratic efforts, both their means and their ends” (Melucci and Lyyra, 226). Drawing from this, I would suggest that social movements that oppose neo-liberal policies that will increase poverty and marginalization, and which were not decided upon through democratic process, strengthen a type of democracy that includes not only political but social and economic elements. I will thus explore whether the social movement was as a force that was able to increase democracy by expanding political, economic and social participation.

In the following section, the limitations of democracy under neo-liberalism will be briefly described in order to draw connections between social movement opposition to neo-liberal policies and democratization. Following this discussion, an overview of the issues brought out in the vast literature on democracy will establish the relationships between democracy, political participation and socio-economic justice. Through the literature, I will explore the notion that democracy, in its current manifestation, is lacking in substance and that social are able to strengthen it so that it may actually serve the majority as more than simply an ideal.

Democracy under Neo-Liberalism- A Limited Existence?

Following the discussion of social movements, their tactics and potential outcomes and their relationship to democratization, it is necessary to explore the nature of democracy in the developing world. In his discussion of the role of democracy in the globalization process, Adrian Leftwich (1993) names the emergence of neo-liberalism as a major reason for increased global concern with democracy in recent decades. He argues that neo-liberalism goes beyond economic theory and contains a normative and functionalist dimension that focuses on theories of the state and politics. Under neo-liberalism, the notion of freedom of the individual is imperative, as “political and social discrimination imposes constraints on the rights and liberties of individuals, interferes with freedom of choice, distorts the free play of markets and hence harms economic development” (Leftwich: 1993, 608). He describes the functionalist aspect of neo-liberalism, stating that proponents of the theory argue that democratic states and properly functioning markets are interdependent. Neo-liberalists believe, however, that large states, with a large economic role, are incompatible with an effective civil society, which they see as necessary for effective democracy. They see large states as corrupt and inefficient, and believe in the necessity of active civil society in order to assure the proper functioning of democracy (Leftwich: 1993, 608).

The neo-liberal notion of democracy contains problems. The reduction of the role of the state in favour of the individual and the market, and the simultaneous implementation of policies such as privatization that are detrimental to the majority of the population to the degree that basic needs are threatened, leads to a very limited and insubstantial form of democracy that does little for the actual good of the people. Proponents of neo-liberalism argue that privatization itself increases democracy by

allowing 'consumers' to 'vote' with their dollar. For example, Benjamin Barber (2000) states: "The free market is in fact a model of market democracy: a democracy of individuals who manifest their preference and express their choices through their spending habits" (Barber, 287). This has implications not only for democracy as a normative concept with a concern for socio-economic equity, but also for the very ability of the poor to participate in the political process. The notion that spending is equal to voting is disturbing, as it implies that rights and needs, in effect, are equated with that which can be purchased, that everything has market value. This inherently implies that the poor have less "spending power" and therefore less "voting power". Therefore, this is extremely undemocratic as it marginalizes, overtly, a major portion of the population.

Neo-liberal policies such as structural adjustment are compatible with a specific type of democracy that is believed to be beneficial to the freedom and success of the market. The type of democracy that spread throughout the world beginning in the late 1980s can be defined as liberal, or procedural, democracy. Luckham and White (1996) define liberal democracy as: "a procedural system involving open political competitions, with multi-parties, civil and political rights guaranteed by law, and accountability operating through an electoral relationship between citizens and their representatives" (Luckham and White: 1996, 2). This definition seems to reflect the hegemonic notion of democracy, which is often associated with neo-liberalism; it is a system based upon multi-party elections and rule of law. Much of what is written on democracy also draws upon Robert Dahl's (1963) definition of polyarchy, which requires, in addition to the characteristics of the above definition, that civil liberties be guaranteed, and that external elites (either military or economic) not be able to exert force over the decisions and

actions of elected officials (Dahl, 63-89; Handleman and Tessler: 1999, 3). However, the liberal definition of democracy falls short of active political participation and increased socio-economic equity. Additionally, the polyarchal definition is not even met entirely in El Salvador and other developing countries where external elites certainly have a large amount of influence over the policies implemented by governments.

The issue of external elite influence over national governments, and the implications of this influence for democracy, is important. As discussed above, democracy as it exists in the majority of the world is married with neo-liberal capitalism. The compatibility of the two ideals, that of democratic governance and citizenship and that of the free market economy, is questionable. In his discussion of the nature of democracy under neo-liberal government in Argentina, Galafassi (2003) argues that: “this capitalist representative democracy is principally based on the concentration of power at the hands of the representatives and the submission of the ones represented” (Galafassi, 397). This calls attention not only to the lack of substance of so-called democracy, but to the real contradictions that exist in a system that praises transition from authoritarianism to democracy as a means to an end, as being of value in and of itself, but in fact has little to show for itself aside from seemingly free elections. Handleman and Tessler (1999), while taking into account the progress that has undoubtedly been made in Latin America in terms of the almost universal transition away from dictatorship, identify “limits on the capacities of emerging democracies... to create representative political institutions, equal opportunities for political participation, honest and efficient bureaucracies and court systems, or a measure of social or economic justice” (Handleman and Tessler, 2). Hershberg (1999) adds to this the obstacles faced by new Latin American democracies in

light of external influence, which, he argues impede the achievement by these nations of a democracy fulfilling the requirements of polyarchy, thus making an expansion of democracy beyond this form incredibly difficult. He names as one of the major limits to democracy the absence of the autonomy of these Latin American states in terms of actually being able to act on the will of the people due to external influence, from foreign governments and international financial institutions for example, under the global economic system.

It is clear that many scholars writing on the difficult relationship between neo-liberalism and democracy, particularly in the developing world, are unsatisfied with the nature of democracy under the current economic system. Alain Touraine (1997) provides an interesting discussion of the emergence of this limited form of democracy, and of its relationship with the market economy. He argues that there is a need to define democracy beyond its conception as simply the protection of citizens against totalitarianism. He states that this limited conception of democracy comes from the history of fascism in much of the world, and without downplaying the importance of democratic transitions, argues that the definition of democracy needs to be expanded. He argues that its limited nature comes from both the initial conception of democracy as being solely political in light of transitions from totalitarianism, and from the nearly simultaneous emergence of modern democracies and the free- market economic model. He further argues that the definition of democracy needs to be expanded *because* of the power of the global economy. Touraine stresses that the regimes thought to be democratic are being weakened by the restrictions of the market economy, and says that 'citizens' have been reduced, in much of the world, to 'consumers' (Touraine, 8). Touraine furthers his

argument by stating that: "... in the absence of any new content, democracy is degenerating into the freedom to consume, into a political supermarket". He says that in liberal democratic countries there is a weakening of any true democratic ideal, to the extent that social problems are being privatized and democracy is "... being seen as either a more or less rigged game or an agency for the penetration of foreign interests" (Touraine, 9-10).

In the above discussion of the limits placed on democratic potential by the neo-liberal economic system, the universal theme seems to be the difficulty of achieving substantive democracy under the pressures faced by individual countries from external forces such as foreign governments, international financial institutions and multinational corporations. The existence of these external pressures calls into question the appropriateness of describing individual countries as democratic when they are in fact largely fulfilling the requirements placed upon them by the representatives of the global system. Additionally, it calls into question the nature of citizenship in countries where voters may cast their vote for a domestic political party, but have no real "say" in the actual formation and implementation of policies that are strongly supported and encouraged by external forces to which they have no access. As mentioned above, and as will be expanded upon at length in the following chapter, privatization policies are strongly encouraged by IFIs as a means of generating economic growth and servicing foreign debt in the developing world. Similarly, sympathetic political parties in Latin America may receive a large amount of support from the governments of powerful countries, such as the United States, which strongly encourage the implementation of neo-liberal policies.

The precariousness of democracy is evident in the impact of external influence and market demands which limit the democratic potential of developing countries. Limits are placed on democracy both due to the nature of the global economic system and due to the failure, in many countries, to provide meaningful political, social and economic citizenship benefits. Although much of what is written on this issue acknowledges the barriers placed to the deepening of democracy by the nature of the global economic system, there seems to be an absence of suggested means by which to strengthen and expand democracy. Laurence Whitehead (1997), for example, identifies the problems involved with a very minimal and procedural standard for democracy in much of the world. He argues that the definition, and therefore the substance, of democracy need to be expanded in order to extend the meaning of it. Although he makes three suggestions on how to remedy this problem, his suggestions seem rather vague. He suggests, for example, the acknowledgement of separate intellectual blocs, in order to challenge American domination. He also suggests greater international deliberation on the issue. These solutions seem ideological and operationally quite challenging. It seems that a much more practical and achievable means of insisting on the strengthening of democracy must occur at the level of the citizenry. Alain Touraine argues that in order to begin to address the need for a new conception of democracy, the “concrete social actor-whether group or individual” must play a vital role (Touraine, 2). Social movements, therefore, may be the appropriate actors to push for the deepening of democracy in a way that does not rely on international cooperation and abstract discussions of the problem. Touraine also states: “In Latin America,..., the most important and most difficult task is to create social and political actors who can struggle against the inequalities that make

democracy and development impossible” (Touraine, 180). Drawing from this discussion, it seems that while great structural change on an international level is certainly an admirable goal, much of the pressure for these changes must come from more local levels.

Social Movements, Democracy and Political Participation

One important way in which social movements may contribute to the strengthening of democracy is by increasing the level of political participation in a given society. Social movements exist as a form of political participation in societies, and may also work to increase participation by other members of the polity. The discussion of the literature on this issue will explore the various dimensions of political participation and will trace the connections of all the dimensions with social movements.

Political participation by the citizenry is one major element of democracy that may be considered to be lacking in the current liberal model. While citizen participation in elections is certainly a crucial element, other forms of political engagement may not be as highly valued under the procedural democratic model. Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson (1976) define political participation as “...activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making”. They further argue that: “Effective support for a substantial shift in economic or social politics is most likely to come from organized collective participation”. (Huntington and Nelson, 3) They argue that political participation must be by people whose primary role in society is not political and that it must refer to actions that attempt to influence the government rather than other bodies within the polity. They argue that actions which qualify as political participation take place when formal channels of influencing the government fail or do not seem promising.

That is, if they are not given the opportunity to vote on a particular policy, by election, referendum or plebiscite, for example, individuals or groups may resort to other means, such as collective action (Huntington and Nelson, 16). Therefore, it seems that Huntington and Nelson view political participation as an important, action-based means by average citizens of extending decision-making beyond the election of party representatives. They focus, in their definition and discussion, on the role of political participation in creating change outside of the formal political process.

Huntington and Nelson do not, however, discuss any relationship between political participation and democracy, and its potential for increasing democratic substance. They recognize that it is an integral part of any modern political society, and provide a lengthy and useful discussion of the different types of participation, but do not approach the issue of informal political participation by social movements or citizens in general as a means of strengthening democracy. Additionally, although they recognize the flaws of the liberal development model, and fault it for assuming that "... the causal flow would be from economics to politics rather than in the reverse direction" (Huntington and Nelson, 20), they discuss the relationship between development and participation solely in terms of how development impacts participation, and not vice versa. That is, they advocate development as a prerequisite to participation, and equate development with modernization. They do not seem to recognize the possibility of political participation leading to development, or a greater quality of distributive justice, and therefore to social and economic democracy.

Hershberg's discussion of political participation and its relationship to democracy is slightly more helpful. He identifies political participation as a necessary component of

democracy, arguing that the obstacles faced in many Latin American countries to political participation are impediments to polyarchal democracy. In fact, Hershberg describes the decline in unionism in Latin America under neo-liberalism as one major reason why the region fails democratically. He says that historically, "...unions constituted important channels for popular sector participation in the public sphere, for constructing collective political identities, and for extending social and economic citizenship" (Hershberg, 307). He claims, however, that the union movement has failed to emerge as a major player after regime change in the region and that neo-liberal policy implementation, including privatizations, has even further "... undermined ... the traditional bases of trade-union power" (Hershberg, 307). He also comments on the failure of social movements to create significant pressure on policy under democratic governments in the region.

Social Movements, Democracy and Socio-Economic Equality

The limits of democratic states which do not adequately provide for their citizens and which contain objectionable levels of poverty are frequently discussed in the literature. As Touraine indicates, there is a need to define democracy as more than freedom from dictatorship. There is, clearly, a need for democracy to mean something in terms of providing citizens with benefits beyond those of the formal political realm. While the strength of democracy, even in the formal political sense, is questionable in many democracies like El Salvador¹, due to the nature of elections and government corruption, the concern of this thesis is not electoral democracies, but with other dimensions which are recognised to be important. Further, the concern is with the trend

¹ Signs of corruption, for example, marked the 2004 Presidential elections.

among neo-liberal governments of adopting policies which protect the interest of market forces rather than the people, and which have a high likelihood of worsening conditions of inequality. The shortcomings of liberal democracy under neo-liberalism were briefly outlined above. In Latin America, between 1980- 1995 (a period of democratic transition), every country with the exceptions of Costa Rica and Uruguay became more unequal in terms of poverty levels and distribution of wealth (Hershberg, 300). The following discussion of literature on socio-economic aspects of democracy demonstrates that the definition and substance of democracy must be expanded for it to have any practical meaning for the majority of people. Additionally, the literature further indicates the limited nature of democracy under neo-liberalism and suggests that social movements are actors with the ability to make an impact towards increasing the democratic value of socio-economic equity in such countries.

Various authors provide definitions of democracy that are broader than the above liberal democratic definition. They call attention to the limits of the liberal democratic hegemonic model, particularly in terms of development and the impacts of globalization. Adam Przeworski states that: “in a democracy, no group is able to intervene when outcomes of conflict violate their self-perceived interests” (Przeworski *in* Monshipouri: 1995, 15). That is, in a true democracy, decisions made by democratic process must be honoured, even when they oppose the interests of elite groups or bodies. This definition clearly relates to Dahl’s definition of polyarchy. As was discussed above, the interests of elites often create a major obstacle to democracy on national levels in the developing world under neo-liberalism. Monshipouri further argues that beyond the procedural requirements of democracy, that are contained within the liberal democratic definition,

“[democracy] includes structures that promote socio-economic opportunity.

Democracy... has applications in the economic, social and cultural spheres: it implies some degree of equality” (Monshipouri, 15-16). In terms of the conditions of the majority of developing countries, and certainly El Salvador, the above definitions do not reflect the reality of democratic governance. For example, Przeworski’s definition requires that no group can intervene when its interests are not met by democratic process. This has not been followed in much of the world, as democratically elected governments have frequently been overtly or covertly made to support policies that have not been decided upon by the electorate. That is, the conditionalities of austerity programs, such as privatization of social services, are not the result of democratic decision, nor can they be reversed by voter demand. These programs and policies are largely encouraged by IFIs or by governments without consultation with the population; they do not base decisions on plebiscites or on discussion with public interest groups or civil society. Also, following Monshipouri’s requirement that democracy involve some manner of socio-economic equality, we can surely argue that the majority of the nations, including El Salvador, are far less than democratic. This also brings up the questions of whether social movements who are fighting against these types of policies are able to contribute to the quality of democracy. This is, of course, the fundamental focus of this thesis.

Handleman and Tessler add that democracy in and of itself has come to be widely valued, but that it is threatened by “... the very incompleteness of democracy as it now exists in much of the developing world...” They argue that this incompleteness is marked by, among other shortcomings, “... the failure of many democratic regimes to address severe social and economic injustices...” (Handleman and Tessler, 3). With specific

reference to Latin America, Taylor (2002) states that, “Much of the discussion of the deficiencies of Latin American democracy is directly linked to the failures of the national economies in question to provide adequately and equitably for their populations” (Taylor: 2002, unpaginated). Hershberg, as indicated above, argues that despite the gains made throughout the region toward democracy, that there are still numerous shortcomings. He states that, “The economic dimension is especially troublesome. The distribution of income and extremes of poverty in many Latin American countries remain such as to undermine the practical significance of formal political equality” (Hershberg, 291). He addresses the connections between democracy and economic factors when stating:

...the connections between economic precariousness and democracy become apparent when we recall that the existence of a democratic polity presupposes citizenship. For democracy to flourish, individuals must be capable of articulating political preferences, organizing collectively in civil society, and participating, both individually and through civic associations, in the political process. To the extent that extreme economic vulnerability or social exclusion inhibit people from political deliberation and organization, the possibility for democratic citizenship is called into question. In such an environment, economic and social dimensions of collective life take on renewed importance for the study of political democracy (Hershberg, 292)

To this, it could be added that democracy, in its presupposition of citizenship, contains a moral and inclusive element that *should* make it objectionable for members of the polity to be severely marginalized, be it politically, socially, or economically.

It seems therefore that democracy, as it exists in much of the world, is limited and does not guarantee either political voice to the majority of people or ensure that development and the reduction of socio-economic inequality will occur. Luckham and White define the dominant liberal democratic system as “low-intensity” democracy, which they claim, “works as a cosmetic cover for continued foreign domination or domestic authoritarianism, generalized corruption or social anarchy” (Luckham and

White: 1996, 7). It seems that they have hope for an extended form of democracy, one that better fits with the definitions given by Przeworski and Monshipouri. Therefore, it can be further argued that democracy, as a concept, contains a normative dimension that extends beyond its actual current manifestation in the context of neo-liberal policy. This normative dimension contains within it an element of “should” that gives encouragement for the extension of the meaning of democracy so that it incorporates socio-economic equity and has true potential in terms of development.

The precarious existence of democracy under neo-liberalism clearly has to do with ideology and with the prioritization of certain rights over others. Dahl (1985) argues that this stems from the difference between ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ as rights under the liberal capitalist system. He argues that the dilemma is not only the protection of liberty from the threat of universal equality, but the vast *inequality* caused by the commitment to liberty, which leads to inequality in the distribution of resources and power. (Dahl, 50-51) He questions how this conflict can be resolved, by looking at the issue of private property rights vs. the rights of self- government. He draws on the American context and outlines the emergence of corporate capitalism, which prioritized private property rights and, he argues, defined democracy in terms of these property rights. He cites Blum, who argues that, “ man [sic] became economic man, democracy was identified with capitalism, liberty with property and the use of it, equality with opportunity for gain, and progress with economic change and accumulations of capital” (Blum in Dahl, 72).

Dahl continues to discuss the position that private property is essential for liberty. He says that there are two possible positions on this, the first one being that everyone has a right to collect and own private property without having this right challenged. This is

unsatisfactory he argues, as "... we remain with the bald unsupported assertion of a natural right". The second position would be, he states, that everyone has this right as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others. In support of this, he quotes Lawrence Becker who states that, "... where a thing can be used to interfere with another's liberty to survive, ownership rights will have to be restricted" (Becker in Dahl, 81). Dahl argues that after proving that private property rights cannot be justified on a moral level, that the only remaining question is of how important or useful they are in terms of "the full range of relevant values: their effects on the democratic process, political equality, political rights, justice, efficiency and economic freedom" (Dahl, 82). He concludes that, as private property cannot be proven to be an inalienable right on moral grounds, that the people should be able to choose, through the democratic process, how economic enterprises are to be controlled and owned so as to achieve democracy and the aforementioned goals. He argues that, "Democracy requires neither opulence nor the material standards that today prevail in advanced industrial countries. It requires instead a widespread sense of relative economic well-being, fairness, and opportunity, a condition derived not from absolute standards but from perceptions of relative advantage and deprivation" (Dahl, 46). The actions of movements, therefore, in opposition to the privatization of public services such as health care, could in fact be seen as actions towards strengthened democracy.

Dahl's argument clearly prioritizes equality over liberty. He does not suggest the abolition of private property, but rather recognizes that private property should not be accumulated at the expense of the well-being or survival of others in a given polity. He sees the need for the notion of democracy to contain elements of political, social and

economic equality, and points out the contradictions of boundless accumulation at the expense of others in so-called democracies. As mentioned above, it is impossible to discuss the defining and strengthening of democracy without taking a normative position on the issue. As is obvious, the position of this thesis is that social and economic equality should be prioritized above and beyond financial gain and accumulation by an elite few. Therefore, the role of the subsequent analysis is to determine if social movements may play a role in deepening or increasing democracy when they oppose policies that are likely to increase, or at least perpetuate, conditions of inequality. Alain Touraine, in his attempt to (re)define democracy, advocates an alternative to procedural democracy, which he calls 'liberating democracy'. This contains a balance between 'negative liberty' (personal freedoms) and 'positive liberty' (majority freedoms). He states that, "The link between negative and positive liberty is the democratic will to enable those who are subordinate and dependent to act freely and to discuss rights and guarantees on equal terms with those who possess economic, political and cultural resources". This relates to the discussion of political participation and has implications for the role of social movements in contributing to the strengthening of distributive democracy in terms of helping to open spaces for discourse between those in power and those affected by the policies of the elite- between those who dominate resources and those most in need of their equitable distribution.

Socio-economic equality and the strengthening of democracy in the developing world bring up the question of the relationship between democracy and development, as well as the role of the nation-state. While these are both enormous fields for discussion and are therefore beyond the scope of this thesis, they will be very briefly discussed in

the specific context of social movements and the expansion of democracy. Alain Touraine sees development and democracy as linked. He states that, "... the representation of interests is a component both in democracy and in development; it is or can be equivalent to a redistribution of the benefits of growth and therefore to social integrations" (Touraine, 154). He argues that the major effect of democracy should be to guarantee that resources are redistributed. He adds that the balance that must exist in democracies is that the state's power is limited so that it does allow certain freedoms, but that it must also play a significant role in terms of the distribution of resources and as "an agent of development" (Touraine, 157). Similarly, Friedman (in Tulchin, 2002) argues that the role of the state must allow for a degree of privacy for its citizens, but must be active in order for democracy to work. He argues that, although the push for civil society to act as an alternative for the state has been strong in the South, civil society cannot replace the state because it is not all-inclusive or representative of the demands of all citizens (Friedman, 24-25). He argues that the role of the state is necessary to a democracy and that, "... contemporary concern with protecting and sustaining democracy needs to be as preoccupied with the state as a vehicle for citizenship and democratic expression as with its limited role as a catalyst of economic activity" (Friedman, 26). Social movements may act as reminders to the state that not only must it recognize majority demand, but it must also act as a redistributive body. Rather than civil society taking over for the state, social movements put pressure on and negotiate with the state in order to insist that it continue to function and that it improves in its democratic quality.

Social Movements, the Mainstream Media and the Strengthening of Democracy through Public Awareness and Debate

One way social movements put pressure on governments to improve democratic potential is through their use of the media as a means of raising public awareness and debate surrounding contentious issues. Much of what is written on the media and democratization focuses on the role of the media in transitions to democracy, or on the democratization of the media itself (Fox, 1988; Rawnsley, G, 2000; Haas, 2004). Much is written on the struggle of the media under authoritarian rule, or on the role of alternative media in the current context in which corporate media predominates. The interest of this thesis, however, is with the ability of social movements to raise awareness and generate debate through the mainstream media as a means of pursuing their goals. Social movements' use of the media is a crucial means by which to increase democracy both directly through influence on public opinion, and, as discussed above, as a means of achieving social movements' goals. Melucci and Lyyra, when discussing possible outcomes of social movements, state that one such outcome is "... the contribution to the setting of the public discourse and public agenda that movements make" (Melucci and Lyyra, 219). They claim that the way in which social movement actions and claims are presented in the mass media is "... a measure of the capacity of a given society to process its own conflicts in a more or less 'democratic' fashion, according to the degree to which the controversial nature of the issue can be addressed, the different voices concerned are heard etc..." (Melucci and Lyyra, 219).

Social movements face numerous obstacles to media access and in terms of the type of coverage they receive and these may impact on the potential for successful

outcomes. Although she discusses the role of the media itself in democratization, Vicky Randall (1993) offers some important insights on the challenges faced in newly democratic societies with developing and/ or sustaining democratic discourse in the media. She discusses the difficulty caused by control of the media, both prior to and following democratic transitions. She recognizes that state control of the media may continue to exist despite transitions to democracy, and also recognizes the role of corporate media ownership and its implications for democracy. She argues that following democratic transition, the ideal role of the media is to "... sustain democratic 'discourse' and help set the agenda for the evolution of the democratic project" (Randall: 1993, unpaginated). She recognizes, however, that obstacles to the media being able to fulfill this role include instances where the government is reluctant to hand over the media and might engage in "covert censorship" create a situation in which journalists feel they must self-censor. She also recognizes the impediments faced, in new democracies, by corporate ownership of the media. She argues, ultimately, that in terms of democratization, the media "... have been better at knocking down the old regime than in positively shaping the new" (Randall: 1993, unpaginated).

On the relationship between the media and democracy, Touraine writes that, "If the media do not belong primarily to the public space, or if they abandon that space and become first of all economic enterprises whose policies are determined by profit or the defence of specific interests, then democracy has no voice" (Touraine, 149). Similarly, in their discussion of the media and public debate, Croteau and Hoynes (1994) discuss the implications for democracy when the media is owned and dominated by governments, corporations, or both. They argue that a 'free press' is absolutely essential to a

democracy, but argue, drawing on a study of American news and public opinion television, that the press is far from free. This, they argue, has a great bearing on the nature of democracy. Croteau and Hoynes state that, "... in a large and complex democracy... citizens primarily rely on the mass media to learn about and participate in the public discussion of policy issues; the media, then, have an important contribution to make toward the construction of a more vibrant democracy" (Croteau and Hoynes, 10). They say that the news media have the potential to contribute to democracy, but question the existence of a press that is completely free from government or market controls.

The notion of a "free" press is an interesting one and is important for the discussion of the role of social movements in increasing democracy through their work with the media. Croteau and Hoynes outline three functions that they believe the media must have in order to make a significant contribution to democracy. Primarily, they argue that the media should act as "a watchdog against abuse by those in positions of power" (Croteau and Hoynes, 10). They claim that this is necessary as a means of promoting and ensuring government accountability and transparency. The image of the media as "watchdog", however, does not generally reflect reality in many countries. "News" is largely generated in the public relations departments of governments or corporations, and has little to do with hard-hitting, investigative journalism. Therefore, when social movements are able to generate public debate either directly through their work with the media or through the coverage that their actions receive, they may be making a significant contribution.

The second role that media must play in order to contribute to democracy, according to Croteau and Hoynes, is as "a source of substantial information for citizens

about social and political issues” (Croteau and Hoynes, 10). They argue that the provision of accurate and analytical information, however, has taken a backseat in importance to the media providing the public with a marketable product that sells. Creating entertaining stories, they argue, has become more important than discussing real issues that affect the population. This has implications for democracy in terms of access to information.

The third function of a “free” press in a democratic society is of most significance to the discussion of the role of social movements. The media, they argue, should act as “a forum in which diverse opinions can be communicated to others” (Croteau and Hoynes, 10). They argue that, “...if citizens are to be active participants in the democratic process, they need information from a wide range of sources, about a wide range of people and events” (Croteau and Hoynes, 21). The media, however, frequently present biased coverage in favour of the elite. Croteau and Hoynes, although speaking of American television, describe a situation that seems applicable to most media situations. They argue that what is called “public debate” in the media is for the most part actually a conversation occurring between members of the elite. This “debate” rarely allows for the position or voice of the true opposition, or those in less powerful positions, to be heard. The authors, however, do not discuss the important role of public broadcasting in a number of countries.

Touraine also makes note of the limited space in the media for opposing viewpoints and the coverage of many sides of important issues and its implications for democracy. He argues that, “Democratic culture cannot exist without a reconstruction of public space or a return to political debate”. To this he adds that democracy cannot exist without the desire by the majority to be involved in decision-making and to raise

awareness for their demands. The ability of social movements to add to the reconstruction of public space and debate through their direct work with the media and as a result of the media coverage they receive will therefore be explored as a dimension of a way in which movements can contribute to democracy. Their capacity to work through the media as a means of increasing democracy is influenced by several conditions. The media can be repressive and can frequently perpetuate elite interests at the expense of social movements and their goals. Movements must, therefore, work hard to gain exposure through the media. It can be argued that the democratizing potential of social movements vis-à-vis the media exists in two ways. Primarily, gaining access to mainstream media, which can be very closed to expressions of interests that challenge elite hegemony, is in itself a democratic achievement. Additionally, by challenging policies that are socially and economically exclusive and by increasing the public space for discussion and debate on these issues, social movements are able to impact democracy.

Movement Access to Media during the Strike

As is indicated above, the media can be an important democratic source, as it can facilitate public awareness and debate surrounding relevant and contentious issues in any given society. Similarly, it can either benefit or hinder social movements depending on the types of coverage it will allow them. In terms of public awareness, generating debate and democracy, the social movement against healthcare privatization faced a significant challenge due to the nature of the mainstream media in El Salvador. Self-censorship is common among journalists in the country. Ladutke states that this is the case for a number of reasons. Primarily, he argues that the free competition among media bodies that frequently creates an atmosphere in which media must be liberal with their

information in order to match the competition does not exist. The media ownership in El Salvador is highly concentrated and therefore the pressure of free competition is not an issue. The political affiliation of media owners and managers, who are for the most part strong supporters of the ARENA party, is also a factor contributing to self-censorship (Ladutke, 132). Additionally, advertisers put a great deal of pressure on media content. Owners of big business in El Salvador make up the elite, who are also often affiliated with the government, and also seek to protect their own interests. Interestingly, Ladutke states that the ARENA government itself is one of the major media sponsors:

“Government entities place public service announcements, statements on current events (strikes, demonstrations, legislation, etc), and thinly disguised propaganda for the ruling party” (Ladutke, 133).

These incentives for self-censorship also mean that certain organizations and groups have trouble finding a voice in the media altogether. The sources of news often come from press departments of business or government. In El Salvador’s mainstream press there is reluctance to cover marginalized or opposition groups in the same way that government, business, and elite bodies are given coverage. Ladutke states that, “the journalists’ reliance upon official sources and information from government press conferences has led them to neglect other actors, such as unions and social movements” (Ladutke, 138). Furthermore, when unions or movements’ actions, such as marches or demonstrations, are covered in the media they may continue to face difficulty in disseminating their message, as the coverage may be lacking in the proper contextual information that is necessary for the general population to understand their motivation.

For example, coverage of a demonstration or march may focus on the inconvenience to commuters rather than on the actual motivation behind the action itself.

Because they have faced difficulty in receiving adequate and appropriate coverage in the mainstream media, opposition groups have made use of *campos pagados* (paid public services announcements) in order to better reach the public. The *campos pagados* released during the 2002-2003 strike in *La Prensa Grafica*, for example, will be drawn upon in the following chapter as a means of analysing the attempt by the unions and social movement groups to raise public awareness during the strike. While these paid announcements do create an opportunity for opposition voices to reach the public through mainstream media, they are not without barriers. For example, Ladutke states that during the 1999- 2000 healthcare strike the paper *El Diario de Hoy* charged twice the amount for *campos pagados* from groups that were critical of the government's position (Ladutke, 141). Another barrier lies of course in the nature of the announcements; in order to run them, an organization must be able to pay for them. This means that marginalized groups, such as *campesino* organizations, may not be able to afford them at all.

The dominant newspapers in El Salvador, *El Diario de Hoy* and *La Prensa Grafica*, maintain close ties with the ARENA party. While *La Prensa* was thought to be slightly more open than *El Diario de Hoy*, it maintains obvious connections to the government. For example, in 1998, the former ARENA minister of education, who has no previous experience in journalism, was hired as the managing editor for the paper (Ladutke, 143). These close ties between government officials and media bodies are quite common in the country.

The previous overview of the literature on social movements, democracy and the dimensions of participation, socio-economic equity and public awareness and debate provides a background of the existing theoretical discussion of these topics. The discussion will be drawn upon in Chapters Five and Six as a means of analysing the Salvadoran experience and placing it in the context of the debate. In the following section, the case study of the Salvadoran movement against healthcare privatization will be outlined. The situation surrounding the healthcare struggle will be outlined, beginning with a brief history of previous privatizations in the country and a discussion of the nature of the healthcare system in El Salvador. The events and conditions leading to the 2002-2003 strike, including numerous proposals for healthcare reform and the process by which the move toward privatization took place will be outlined. Additionally, an overview of the events of the strike and its major outcomes will be provided.

Chapter 3: Case Study- Social Service Privatization and the Social Movement Response

Privatization of social services is a trend that is occurring all over Latin America. The process is often encouraged by International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank, and subsequently taken on by governments with little to no civic consultation. In this chapter, a discussion of the experience of healthcare privatization elsewhere in Latin America will help to establish that the process is one that has a record of expanding inequity in poor countries, and which generally takes place through a process that fails to reflect a commitment to democratic values such as participation, transparency and equity. A discussion of the experience, in El Salvador, with the privatization of electricity will help to make a similar case in the context of the country itself.

This chapter also includes a discussion of the healthcare system in El Salvador, as it existed prior to the strike. This will be followed by an overview of some of the major proposals for reform that were made by various sectors in El Salvador, including the doctors' and healthcare workers' unions that were central to the strike and the business sector. This discussion will help to establish the conditions that led to the calls for reform in the Salvadoran health system, particularly in terms of improving accessibility for lower income groups. It will also establish the existence of diverse reform proposals which reflect differing views on the roles of the state and of the private sector in healthcare. This helps to demonstrate that alternatives existed to the government's reform model, and that these alternatives reflected a more participatory process and greater concern with improving health conditions for the poor.

Finally, this chapter contains a history of the major actors involved in the strike, and the major events that took place during the conflict. This discussion includes the demands of the strikers, the response by the authorities from ISSS and the government, the tactics used by the movement during the strike, the major events of the period and the process of strike resolution and the results of this process.

The Experience of Privatization in Latin America and El Salvador

Neo-liberal policies encourage, among other things, export-led growth and the shrinking of state spending on formally public services. Laurell (2000) indicates that structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and their accompanying privatization policies, which began in Latin America in the late 1970s and early 1980s, were based upon a new ideological approach to social services that comes from liberalism. In this approach, caring for social needs is seen as an individual responsibility that should be the duty of the family and exercised through the market. Thus, social services under the liberal model are viewed as private goods (Laurell, 313). The model suggests that states overspend on inefficient social programs and that adjustments are necessary so that this spending can be channelled into more profitable ventures. A reduction of state spending and the commoditisation of these services can therefore lead to greater efficiency and better services for “consumers”. In reality, however, prior to SAPs, Latin American states were not spending a great deal on social programs. Edwards (2003) argues that there is little to no evidence that state spending in the public sector was actually contributing to conditions of poverty, and that, beginning in the 1960s, states were actually making improvements to healthcare, education and water. Similarly, Laurell notes that, “most fiscal adjustment that is inherent to the SAPs has mainly been implemented at the cost of

social expenditure, despite the fact that the states' fiscal crisis had little to do with high social spending" (Laurell, 311). The widespread belief, however, in the state as an inefficient manager of social programs allowed for the new model in which social services are commoditised and poverty has largely been managed on a project-based, rather than structural, level (See also Armada et al: 2001; Chomsky: 1999; Coburn: 2000; Navarro: 1998).

The adjustments made under SAPs, however, have done nothing to eradicate poverty. In fact, poverty levels have increased in many countries in the region in the years that countries were under these programs (Dion: 2002; Laurell: 2000; SAPRIN Online: 1999). As indicated in the previous chapter, only Costa Rica and Uruguay did not see increased poverty levels between 1980 and 1995 (Hershberg, 300). Notably, Laurell argues that the majority of Latin American countries are not poor countries, but rather that they have extreme levels of poverty. The distinction, she argues, is that poor countries lack the actual resources with which to eradicate poverty and therefore require increased economic development and growth. Countries such as those in Latin America, however, require major shifts in the *redistribution* of resources, in addition to appropriate economic growth policies, in order to address widespread poverty (Laurell: 308). These needs, she argues, have not been met under neo-liberal structural adjustment policies, of which privatization is a part. She argues that structural adjustment programs have failed to create sustained economic growth and have had a "negative impact on the distribution of income and wealth; on employment and wages; and on the provision of public benefits and services" (Laurell, 310). This, she says, has led to an increase in the Gini coefficient in all countries under SAPs, while it decreased in Colombia and Uruguay, which did not

adopt SAPs. Laurell cites data from CEPAL: “the richest 10 percent of households pocket twice the income of the poorest 40 percent of households in Argentina and Mexico, three times in Chile, four times in Brazil and 1.7 times in Venezuela. In all these countries income distribution is substantially worse than a decade ago” (Laurell, 310).

Between 1986 and 1999 there were 396 privatizations of public assets in Latin America (Edwards, 2003). On the failure of the privatization model to generate wealth or alleviate poverty in Latin America, Edwards states: “Throughout much of the region, governments lack the resources and ability to provide adequate oversight and regulations of the private sector, such as it is. And ‘consumers’ lack the mobility, ability and resources to shop around for the most suitable provider of such necessities as heat, water, healthcare and first grade” (Edwards, 1).

The privatization of healthcare has been taking place all over Latin America, and although the model varies due to individual systems, the process is generally the same. Laurell indicates that healthcare privatization usually results in the division of health services into a lucrative sector and a sector designed to provide coverage to the poor. She states that, “...since healthcare for poor people is usually not an attractive business, reforms tend to establish a dual health system with a market-driven subsystem for the insured with an important private involvement and a public assistance subsystem for the uninsured” (Laurell, 319). She says that the result is generally the prioritization of financial management by private insurance companies at the expense of service provision, which is similar to the system in the United States. The public service, she argues, begins to resemble a poverty program rather than a proper state-funded health service.

The detrimental effects of the implementation of neo-liberal adjustment and privatization policies in Latin America can be seen by examining the experiences of countries that have a long history of these reforms. The Chilean model of economic reform has been largely celebrated as a success story of neo-liberal economic management. For example, the privatized pension system in Chile is frequently cited as the “blueprint” for neo-liberal reform and is the basis for World Bank policy prescriptions (Taylor, 2003: 22). The success of this model, however, becomes questionable when examining the consequences of the reforms for social equality and access by the population to vital services. These consequences, Taylor argues, have effects that reach much beyond Chile itself, as the model has been drawn upon so frequently in countries across the region.

Neo-liberal reform and its accompanying wave of privatizations began in Chile under the Pinochet regime, as a replacement to the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model. Under this model, the pension, education and healthcare systems were privatized, and access to these services began to be conceived of as related to individual freedom of choice rather than as rights-based, state- allocated services. Neo-liberal economic programs continued in Chile after the fall of Pinochet, and although spending on health and education increased, major disparities in wealth and opportunity continue to exist (Taylor, 2003: 27).

The reform of the Chilean healthcare system was based upon decentralisation and partial privatization. The reforms were introduced in 1981 with the establishment of mandatory health insurance payments for all workers, who pay 7% of their earnings into the system (Taylor, 2003: 37). Chileans can choose to either pay into the public system

(FONASA) or the private system (ISAPRE). Paying into the latter means a much higher quality of service with much higher premiums. Importantly, access to private insurers is also based upon a “risk analysis” according to age and sex. This means that they are very exclusive and favour “ideal” clients who do not fall into higher risk categories. Therefore, older people, women of childbearing age and other higher risk users have less likelihood of being accepted for coverage than middle-aged, higher earning men (Taylor, 2003: 38). Taylor states: “The result is that the ISAPRE presents an exclusionary system which, in 1990, only 16% of the population being a member” (Taylor, 37). In 1997, 35.3% of Chile’s population was covered by the private system as a whole, which includes 23.7% covered by ISAPREs, 2.7% by the Armed Forces health care system, 0.9% by other systems, and 8.0 % who cover their own health care expenses. (PAHO Country Profile Online: 2001)

The FONASA system is funded by individual contributions and is subsidized by the public treasury. Patients, in addition, are charged for treatments based upon their income level. The service level in FONASA is considered to be lower than that in ISAPRE. The system is further strained as some patients who are insured for the ISAPRE system visit the public system for minor concerns in order to receive “no-claim bonuses” (Taylor, 2003: 38). Additionally, in recent years, the public system itself is becoming polarized as it is allowing those with adequate resources to pay for better service within the FONASA system. The public system groups users into four categories based on income, with 56.7 % of co-payment subsidies going to the bottom 20%. Taylor points out the importance of understanding that this group is not only the most poor, but also the most affected by health problems. He states: “...even this impoverished section is

expected to pay a requisite part of their salaries into the FONASA system and receive the lower quality of care offered within the public system” (Taylor, 39). Co-payments, or user fees, even in public healthcare, are widespread in Latin America and through the developing world. Many analysts argue that these payments are harmful to the poor and have a great impact on access to healthcare (Ridde: 2006; Whitehead et al: 2001).

Taylor argues that, “... the ideal of freedom as expounded by neo-liberal acolytes is a reality only for those individuals with incomes adequately elevated so as to choose between private providers” (Taylor, 2003: 40). The inadequacies of this greatly celebrated model, in terms of providing sufficient care for all members of society regardless of income, demonstrate the unlikelihood that similar social service privatization in the region will have more success in terms of increasing quality of and access to health services.

Privatization in El Salvador

A discussion of the history of privatization in El Salvador will help to demonstrate the problematic effects of the process. Numerous types of privatization have taken place in the last two decades, with little civic participation in the process, and with no benefit for the majority of the population.

The process of privatization started in El Salvador in 1989. The first wave of economic reforms involved the privatization of the banking sector between 1989- 1999, and was intended to reduce the debt and deficit and to increase investment in the country’s infrastructure. The second wave of privatizations, taking place between 1990 and 1993, involved the sale of state-owned businesses that did not provide social services, such as hotels and sugar mills. Finally, the third wave of privatizations involves

the privatization of public services. So far, electricity, telecommunications and the pension system have been privatized. The World Bank, IMF and the Inter- American Development Bank (IDB) encouraged these privatizations as part of SAPs. (SAPRIN El Salvador Online: 2000). A study of the effects of the privatization of electricity in El Salvador was conducted by the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network, a global organization that seeks to increase civil society participation in economic policy and to help organized groups challenge SAPs. It measures success partly based upon the objectives of the IFIs themselves and shows either neutral or negative effects in the case of electricity privatization in El Salvador. That is, the study shows no real improvement in quality, coverage or price of electricity services. Although the quality of service before privatization was poor, privatization did nothing to improve it. After privatization took place, consumers registered a number of complaints with the Centre for the Defence of the Consumer (CDC), the most common being elevated charges. The study also found that women were the most negatively affected, having to increase their workload by an average of three hours a day to make up for or save on electricity. Additionally, the study indicated that prices were increased most in the areas of lowest consumption, while prices decreased in areas of higher consumption (represented, for example, by large businesses). Consumers and civil society also indicated dissatisfaction with the lack of public awareness and consultation surrounding the process of privatization. The study indicated that: “Many social sectors continue to perceive a lack of transparency in the management of these processes and a total lack of participation of civil society in the decision-making process and their orientation” (SAPRIN: 2000, 12).

The experience of electricity privatization, as well as the negative effects of health privatization throughout the Latin American region, may be contributing factors to the intense opposition by the Salvadoran population to the process in El Salvador. While it is universally accepted that the Salvadoran healthcare system is in need of reform, many representatives from numerous sectors believe that such reforms can and should take place without privatization. This will be further drawn out in the discussion of the various health reform proposals in El Salvador.

Privatization of electricity in El Salvador, as is demonstrated by the above discussion, involved little to no benefit to the majority of people. In the country, 45% of the population are living on less than \$2.00 a day and there is a Gini coefficient of 50.8%, marking significant disparity between the rich and the poor (UNDP El Salvador Country Report Online: 2003). The public hospital system covers the poorest people, many of whom live on less than the minimum wage of USD 143.00 a month. This system covered 74% of hospitalizations in 2002, while the Social Security hospitals was responsible for 17% of hospitalizations (Schuld: 2). These numbers indicate a population that is in great need of accessible healthcare and which cannot afford to shoulder the costs of privatization. Clearly, a system based upon open competition and consumer choice in healthcare would exclude a vast majority of Salvadorans, and would leave out those at most risk of poverty related morbidity (such as diarrhoea, dengue and respiratory problems). In opposition to health privatization on human rights grounds, Jovel et al (2003) cite the Salvadoran constitution, which guarantees the right to state-provided healthcare as a means of ensuring the protection of economic, social and cultural rights. Healthcare privatization, as it threatens access to healthcare by a majority of people, can

be seen to contradict the democratic value of socio-economic equity. The following section will provide more detail about the nature of the pre-strike healthcare system in El Salvador, and will help to further demonstrate the ways in which privatization is threatening to democracy.

The Healthcare System in El Salvador: Composition and Conditions

Prior to the healthcare sector strike in 2002- 2003, public debate about the conditions of the Salvadoran healthcare system and the required reforms was very active. As is typical in most developing countries, poverty puts an enormous strain on the health of the population in El Salvador. The major health problems in the country are generally the result of malnutrition, lack of basic sanitation and insufficient funding for health promotion and primary attention to health (Oyague, 2000, 14). In 2000, the Medical College stated that,

“...in general, the Salvadoran population suffers in the majority from infectious diseases and those of deprivation, with an increase in the derivatives of violence and an increase in chronic degenerative illnesses, and these make up an epidemiological profile in transition, with a predominance of illnesses typical of poverty” (Oyague, 2000): 14-15).

Additionally, clinics and other healthcare centres are insufficient in numbers and location to meet the requirements of the population. It is estimated that the poor population has frequently not sought formal healthcare due to their inability to afford it or to physically access it, particularly in rural areas. This population tends to care for themselves during illness, or to seek help from traditional medicine. Although the exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, it is estimated that for 2000, the national formal health coverage

reached only approximately 73% of the population (Oyague, 2000: 19). El Salvador has a three-tiered healthcare system, similar to that of much of the Latin American and non-English speaking Caribbean region. The difficulties facing this system include: low coverage of the population, excessive bureaucracy in the public and social security systems, marked inefficiency and inequity, high administrative costs and inaccessibility for traditionally marginalized groups such as rural and informal workers, women and children (Oyague, 2000, 19-20).

The public healthcare system in El Salvador is run by the Ministry for Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS). Since 1987, MSPAS has been assigned the tasks of regulation, administration, technical support, financial support and direct health service provision for the public sector. Oyague explains that there are three levels on which MSPAS functions. The first is at the basic level, which is made up of areas of provision such as rural clinics and nutrition centres. The second level involves 30 general hospitals that comprise basic specializations and general medicine, general surgery, podiatry, obstetrics and gynaecology. The third level of MSPAS includes the major central hospitals such as Hospital Rosales and Hospital Benjamin Bloom (the children's hospital) in San Salvador which provide more specialized attention (Oyague, 2000: 21-22).

MSPAS establishments are financed directly through the National General Budget. The system, in 2000, employed 25, 859 workers. In 1996, the number of hospital beds in the system was 2964 for approximately 85% of the population of 5.2 million people. Oyague argues, however, that the estimated number of people covered by the system (85%) is a projected figure by MSPAS only and that it should actually be much

lower due to the lack of access to the system faced by many Salvadorans (Oyague, 2000: 23).

The second component of the health system is part of the Salvadoran Institute for Social Security (ISSS) system. ISSS was created under the Law of Social Security in 1954 and covers common illnesses, accident, work based accident and injury, maternity, disability, old age and death. In theory, all waged workers are covered under the ISSS system. Informal workers, however, such as agricultural labourers and domestic workers, do not receive coverage within the system. ISSS is financed by social security payments by the system's patrons, interest payments and utilities, subsidies, payments from fines and interest, and taxes (Oyague, 2000: 24). The system covers workers who are actively paying into the system (*derechohabientes*), pensioners and the spouses and children under the age of six of those paying in. Coverage in 1999 was 920 thousand, or 15% of the population and 21.5% of the economically active population (Oyague, 2000: 27).

ISSS establishments include twelve hospitals, 144 private clinics, 32 communal clinics, 35 medical units and have a total of 1498 hospital beds. In total, ISSS employs 11, 368 workers, the majority of whom are located in urban areas. The concentration of clinics and hospitals is also largely urban. Oyague indicates that ISSS covers only half of the number of appointments covered by MSPAS (Oyague, 2000:30).

The private sector is the third tier of the healthcare system in El Salvador and is composed of both for profit and non-profit bodies. The non-profit private sector is made up of NGOs, churches, foundations, community organizations and practitioners of traditional medicine. The existing lucrative private sector is composed of private business, private and pre-paid medical insurance and the manufacture and sale of

pharmaceuticals. Oyague states that private services are frequently contracted by groups of large income earners who work for big business or in the financial sector. The private sector has had a long history in El Salvador, but the need for private services among the wealthier sector of the population is being increasingly justified partly due to the perception that the social security system is insufficient to cover their needs. For example, Oyague cites lack of coverage in the ISSS system to children over the age of six as one reason used to justify paying for private coverage and proposals for increased privatization. Additionally, she states, “the rest of the reasons have to do with the deficiency in coverage of ISSS that has been outlined profusely in the press, in other media, in special reports etc” (Oyague: 2000, 38-39). Schuld (2003) argues that the inefficiency of the healthcare system, which was used to justify its privatization, was artificially generated by the right-wing governing party (ARENA), which represents a great deal of elite interest. Many party supporters are involved in businesses that would benefit from the privatization of the healthcare system. Schuld indicates that the charge by ARENA that the system is inefficient is particularly suspicious, as the party itself had appointed all hospital directors in the period between 1990- 2003. She also states that the Ministry of Health only spent 5.8% of its pharmaceutical budget in the first half of 2002, creating an artificial shortage of medicine, which was used to illustrate the system’s inefficiency (Schuld: 2003, 2). The creation of this “crisis” by the government indicates a serious lack of transparency surrounding the health system which demonstrates the undemocratic nature of the process of privatization.

Despite the increased push to expand the private sector, private insurance is a very small component of the current private sector spending in El Salvador. Spending by

household on private healthcare and on private insurance, in 2000, was less than 1% of national spending. Spending on healthcare in general, however, had increased from 4.2% by household in 1996 to 6.8% in 1999 (Oyague, 2000: 39). State spending on healthcare in the late 1990s was approximately \$195 per person (Oyague, 2000: 59). Despite an increase in national spending on health, household spending on healthcare rose as well. Household spending on health was concentrated on paying for doctors and other health professionals (26%), spending on hospitalization (17%), buying medications (41%), and other expenses such as lab tests, cardiograms etc. (16%). The Pan American Health Organization Country Health Profile on El Salvador, last updated in 2001, indicates that overall expenditure on health by the government was 8.3%, with 41.8% of government health spending going to the public sector. Of private spending on health, 97.0% was provided by households (PAHO Country Health Profile El Salvador: 2001). A more recent study by the Central American organization Social Watch indicates that government spending on health in 2002 was 3.6% of GDP, and that in 2004 it dropped to 3% (Social Watch: Resumen El Salvador: 2005). Oyague indicates that essentially 70% of national spending on health comes “from the pockets” of Salvadorans and not from the government. Supplemental spending on healthcare takes place in every sector and by members of every social stratum. High and middle- income earners may spend to cover their families’ medical costs in spite of contributing to ISSS, due to limitations placed on *derechohabientes* within the system, such as access to certain tertiary services. High-income earners may pay for private services and hospitalization. Other Salvadorans who attend public hospitals are frequently required to pay “voluntary fees” for the services they receive. The actual breakdown of each income group’s spending on health is

unknown, however the majority of spending by individuals on health would take place in the private sector. Oyague argues that the significant elevation of household spending on health does not only demonstrate the huge deficit in institutional coverage by the three levels of the system, but also shows the lack of effectiveness and efficiency within the system, particularly in MSPAS and ISSS. She argues that when poor families have to pay “from their pockets” they become further trapped in poverty as resources that could be used otherwise, for nutrition or education for example, are depleted (Oyague, 2000: 61).

The participants in the social movement against healthcare privatization were objecting to plans for a system that would increase individual or family spending on health and reduce the state’s responsibility for providing coverage to its citizens. The system was clearly in need of reforms that would increase access by Salvadorans to healthcare services. Privatization threatened to further lessen this access and increase the cost of healthcare for the majority of people.

Proposals for Healthcare Reform

The 2002-2003 strikes occurred following a long history of contention regarding the need for health sector reform in El Salvador. Numerous actors from various sectors released proposals throughout the decade preceding the strike, which included different approaches to reform. In addition to government and business reform proposals, with a clear privatization agenda, actors such as the doctors and healthcare workers released proposals that showed very different priorities. A brief discussion of these reform proposals will help to demonstrate that in addition to opposing privatization-based reforms, many of the actors in the strike has previously proposed alternatives which

sought to improve access by marginalized groups to health and to promote greater citizen participation in the reform process itself.

The clear ineffectiveness of the Salvadoran health system to reach the majority of the population, and to provide affordable and accessible services, led to an extensive debate over the process of reform. The discussion of health reform began in El Salvador in the early 1990s, and involved many sectors, both national and international. As part of the push for economic reforms throughout the developing world, the World Bank released, in 1993, its “World Development Report: Investing in Health”. In this report it advocated that countries “encourage greater diversity and competition in the provision of health services by decentralizing government services, promoting competitive procurement practices, fostering greater involvement by nongovernmental and other private organizations, and regulating insurance markets” (World Bank Development Report 1993 Online). This demonstrates the encouragement by IFIs of competition in the social service sector and a movement away from state-supported healthcare. In El Salvador, the World Bank, the Inter- American Development Bank (IDB), USAID, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) formed the Group for the Analysis of the Health Sector in El Salvador (ANSAL). In 1994, ANSAL released a report entitled “Health Reform: Towards its Equity and Efficiency” which proposed the following: a single national health system, the transfer of the management of MSPAS and ISSS hospitals to the private sector, which could take place through the “process of the outsourcing of services”, and the division of service into two levels- basic, for those with fewer resources, and extended, for those who could afford to pay (Mesa Permanente de PDDH, 2004: 6-7). The government of El Salvador

proceeded towards this type of reform in the late 1990s, leading to the first conflict between the unions and social movement and the government.

In 1998, President Armando Calderón Sol convened the National Commission on Health (CONASA), which was composed of a group of well-known health professionals. The Commission included the ex-Minister of Public Health, the president of the Dental Society, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Doctor José Matías Delgado University, the owner of the private Hospital Centro Diagnóstico and the Executive Director of the National Association for Private Enterprise (ANEP) (Mesa Permanente de PDDH, 2004: 8). CONASA published the “Proposal for Guidelines for the Reform of the Health Sector” in 1999. The CONASA proposal suggested: the establishment of mandatory universal insurance with private options, a decentralized operating system with independent management of centres and opportunities for private providers, and decentralized centres that would focus on health promotion and prevention.

Other proposals for reform came from various sectors with differing stakes in the healthcare system. The Medical College released a proposal, entitled “Citizens’ Proposal for Health”, which was supported by SIMETRIS and numerous other organizations (Mesa Permanente de PDDH, 2004: 10). The proposal included an evaluation of the healthcare system in El Salvador and outlined objectives for reform in MSPAS and ISSS. It called for participatory management of the healthcare institutions, emphasized decentralization without privatization, and called itself a political, as well as technical, proposal (Oyague, 2000: 80). Their proposal suggested that MSPAS take on a financial management and service provision responsibility for members of the population living in all levels of poverty. ISSS would increase its coverage to include workers in the informal

sector, domestic employees and rural workers. The proposal also advocated the modernization of the lucrative and non-profit sectors, and advocated reform without privatization of public services. It would be financed through an increase in public spending on healthcare, in addition to contributions from workers and their employers, general investments and donations (Oyague, 2000: 81).

STISSS also released their own proposal, despite being signatories to the Medical College document. Relative to the College proposal, the STISSS proposal diminishes the role of MSPAS and replaced its participatory management with ISSS's "management and leadership in the provision of services" (Oyague, 2000: 82). ISSS would extend coverage to previously marginalized workers and would provide their own health services and would also subcontract auxiliary services to private bodies. In this proposal, MSPAS would act only as a managerial body, which would transfer hospitals and health centres to the ISSS system over a period of time, eventually leading to a system in which the workers in the ISSS system manage each of these. ISSS would provide programs promoting nutritional and environmental health and would make efforts to reach the whole population. The system would be competitive, but would support those who cannot pay, and all those able to pay would help to support the system.

A third proposal came from the Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES). This proposal was typical of the mainstream model for reform in Latin America, such as that in Chile, as outlined above. It advocated privatization of the health system, based upon the mandatory purchase of insurance. This insurance would be subsidized by the state for those who could not afford it. The

FUSADES proposal advocated open competition, which would be allowed to take place between the public and private sectors.

The numerous proposals for healthcare reform from various sectors in El Salvador led President Francisco Flores to convene the Advisory Committee for Health Sector Reform in 1999. This group was instructed to generate a proposal for reform, based upon consensus, which incorporated five major proposals that were released by various groups. The Committee was to take into account the CONASA, Mesa XIII (proposal put forward by the National Commission for Development), FUSADES, the Medical College and STISSS proposals. The Office of the Human Rights Ombudsperson argues that despite problems with the Committee, it represents the first attempt at a reform process that was participatory and that it represented “an important opportunity to generate concrete agreements” regarding the healthcare situation in El Salvador (Mesa Permanente, 2004: 10).

In December 2000, the Committee released, to President Flores, their “Proposal for Integrated Health Reform”, which contained seven guidelines for reform. These guidelines reflected concerns regarding:

“the consolidation of the national health system, a holistic model of attention (promotion, prevention and treatment), institutionalization of social participation and decentralization of practices across the system, the development of human resources and inter-sectoral response while promoting the universality of social services for the whole population” (Mesa Permanente: 2004, 11).

The proposal, however, advocated a mixed healthcare system that “opened the door for the implementation of private participation in the provision of services”.

Additionally, the proposal delayed outlining a financial and legal model, which are integral aspects of reform (Mesa Permanente, 2004: 11).

Following the release of the Committee's proposal, President Flores was supposed to convene a *Commission for Monitoring the Proposal for Reform* in order to deal with the financial and legal aspects of the proposal, in addition to the aspect of social participation. This process was delayed for approximately two years, and in 2002 the issues of privatization and the concession of services returned to the national dialogue. The Office of the Human Rights Ombudsperson suggests that business saw an opportunity for privatization due to the failure of the government to follow through with the 2000 proposal and the subsequent Commission (Mesa Permanente, 2004: 12). In 2002, at the Third National Meeting of Private Business (ENADE), the business sector advanced a proposal for reform that focussed on the ISSS system and prioritized private sector involvement in accordance with "market logic". This proposal ignored the previous attempts at multi-sector and civil society involvement. President Francisco Flores and his government later responded to the ENADE proposal and to the strike by advancing the "Democratization of the Provisional Health System", in which he followed the lines of the business sector in his plan for reform. This process later took place to such an extent that the Salvadoran government displayed its willingness to participate in these types of reforms by forming working groups surrounding this model of reform. The working groups, however, showed no intention of involving civil society, ignoring the supposed plan for the Commission for Monitoring the Proposal for Reform and multi-sector involvement (Mesa Permanente, 2004: 12).

The attempt by the Flores government to engage in reforms of this nature was immediately rejected by SIMETRISSS, STISSS, the *Gremio Médico* (organization of SIMETRISSS, The Medical College and AMENA) and other social movement organizations. They criticized the Flores government for ignoring the process leading to the 2000 proposal for reform, led by the Advisory Committee for Health Sector Reform, and because it favoured the private sector and the outsourcing of services. They were also angered by the obvious dismissal by the government of multi-sector and civil society involvement in the reform process. They rejected the ENADE proposal for ISSS and the subsequent move by the Flores government towards privatization. The failure of the government to follow through on the 2000 proposal and its obvious movement toward privatization contributed to the nine-month strike, supported by a large number of social movements, against the privatization of healthcare (CISPES Online)

Major Actors in the 2002-2003 Movement against Healthcare Privatization

The major actors involved in the struggle against the privatization of healthcare include the Medical College, SIMETRISSS, STISSS and other doctors' organizations, nurses. Other organizations such as the Citizens' Alliance against Healthcare Privatization, Women for Dignity and Life (Las Dignas), the Sinti Techan Network and the Union of Municipal Employees (AGEPYM), the Maquilishuatl Foundation and the October 12th Popular Movement of the Resistance (MPR-12) also played a significant role in the movement.

On the issue of reform, the Medical College argued that privatization would not improve healthcare conditions in a country where over half of the population is poor. They also argued that ISSS was placing too much emphasis on the problems of

inefficiency within the system's management when the real problem was in fact the lack of access by the majority of the population to health services. They argued that the government was deficient in motivation for improvements in the area of health (Oyague, 2000: 93-94).

SIMETRISSS, made up of approximately 1300 doctors in the ISSS system, was created in October 1997 and maintains a critical position towards the management of ISSS. They first went on strike in 1998, and followed with a longer strike, from November 1999 to March 2000, which protested the government's failure to comply with agreements made in 1998 and its approach toward health reform. They argue that the majority of their proposals and suggestions are ignored by the management of ISSS and strike actions fulfill both the goal of pushing for the amelioration of health services for the population and for demanding respect for the union itself (Oyague, 2000: 94). During the 1999- 2000 strike, SIMETRISSS, along with the Medical College and the National Medical Association (AMENA), formed the Tripartite Commission against healthcare privatization. The strikers were also supported by the union of doctors, nurses, technicians and personnel from public hospitals, which had an extensive history of opposing privatization in El Salvador.

STISSS, the union of workers in the social security system, has been an active union since 1966. Through the 1970s and 1980s the majority of their actions surrounded the issue of salaries and the union's collective agreement (STISSS Online: 2005). Beginning in the 1990s, STISSS began to be active in protesting the flexibilization of labour and privatizations. They supported the movement against the privatization of electricity, telephone services and pensions and were an integral part of the movement

against privatization in the health sector. They were active participants in the strikes of 1999-2000 and 2002-2003 and have since been active in post-strike labour and policy related protests.

Other non-union organizations played a significant role in the opposition to privatization in 2002-2003. The Citizens' Alliance against the Privatization of Healthcare was composed of organizations representing the health sector, women, the environment, consumers, promoters of public participation and local development, unions and labour associations, and public and municipal employees (Mesa Permanente de PDDH, 2004: 12). It held marches, demonstrations and other actions in support of the strike and in opposition to privatization. Other social organizations that were active in their support of the strike and in opposition to privatization included the Sinti Techan Network, the Maquilishuatl Foundation and the October 12th Popular Movement of the Resistance (MPR-12) and other organizations mentioned above.

Major Events in the Movement against Healthcare Privatization

Popular struggle has a long and important history in El Salvador. Since the beginning of the 19th century people have organized to oppose the constant economic domination of the majority by a few, corrupt politics, military dictatorship and human rights abuse. Struggle has taken place in the form of the peasant uprisings led by Farabundo Marti in the 1930s and the FMLN guerrilla offensive of the 1970s and 1980s, which shaped the country's current politics. Popular organization has also included the opposition to other privatizations such as electricity and water, and organization by informal workers such as market vendors for increased rights and against oppression. The

tradition of social organization and popular protest is extremely important in the history and culture of El Salvador. Although a detailed history of this struggle is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to recognise that the social movement against health care privatization is a part of a much longer and larger tradition of struggle.

The 2002-2003 movement against healthcare privatization was preceded by a decade of opposition on the issue. Actions against healthcare privatization began in 1992 when the General Union of Hospital Workers (SIGESAL) protested World Bank and IMF structural adjustment related privatizations at Rosales, the country's major public hospital. In 1993 workers went on a weeklong hunger strike against the privatization of ophthalmology and administrative services at Rosales. In 1995, 100 workers, including the whole board of the union and some very prominent doctors, were fired due to their protest involvement (Schuld: 2003, 2). During the time that the Advisory Committee for Health Sector Reform was working on its proposal, STISSS and SIMESTRISS were involved in a strike, lasting from November 1999 to March 2000, which prioritized labour issues and demands for healthcare reform.

The 2002-2003 strike began, as discussed above, in an environment of major contention over the necessary steps for healthcare reform in the country and of repression toward unions and their members. The main demand of the strike, throughout the nine-months, was that the government guarantee not to privatize the healthcare system; this included health services themselves and the outsourcing of services, such as cleaning, security and food, which could be managed internally. Other demands were that there be no reprisals taken against the strikers and that wages and jobs lost during the strike be recovered (Schuld, 2-3).

Doctors and ISSS employees went on a day long strike on September 5th, 2002 and on September 18th STISSS members walked off the job indefinitely. The following day, the Legislative Assembly approved a bill which would ban the outsourcing of services unless approved by the legislature. On September 27th, SIMETRISSS members joined the strike and on September 30th presented their anti-privatization bill to the Legislative Assembly. This would later become Decree 1024, the “State Guarantee of Health and Social Security”. On October 3rd, 35 striking doctors and their families received death threats from a death squad calling themselves “Commandos of Extermination” (CISPES Online: 2003) The strike was declared illegal by the labour court on October 8th, based upon a strict interpretation of the constitution that prohibits any form of strike action in the public sector. At that point approximately 15 hospitals and health centres around the country were on strike (*La Prensa Grafica* Online: October 8th, 2002). During the strike, emergency and maternity services were maintained in the hospitals of the ISSS and MSPAS systems.

On October 9th, President Francisco Flores vetoed the September 19th bill, leading to workers from MSPAS stopping work in protest. Flores then presented, on October 14th, his plan for healthcare reform. Although he publicly stated that the plan would not include privatization, he made no mention of his intention to prohibit the outsourcing of services. He is quoted in *La Prensa Grafica* as stating, “...at no moment have we thought of selling hospitals or clinics” (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 12th, 2002, p.6). In his proposal for reform, Flores presented the opportunity for ISSS clients to choose the provider that was better for them. He stated that “...they can opt for any private health centre or stay in the security system” (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 15th, 2002, p. 3). He

was obviously using the neo-liberal discourse of choice, common in plans for health reform such as the Chilean model, when presenting his proposal. The strikers responded to Flores' plan by calling it "nothing more than the confirmation of privatization", and stating their intention to increase strike action (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 16th, 2002, p.2).

On October 16th, the first "White March" took place, with over 50,000 participants. The supporters were made up of doctors, nurses, student and other supporters. The White Marches were distinct in that supporters wore white to symbolize the medical profession. There were six White Marches, along with numerous other marches and demonstrations, throughout the nine-month period. The marchers used slogans such "Pay or Die" to succinctly demonstrate the severity of the privatization issue in a country such as El Salvador. The slogan indicated that, with a new privatized healthcare system, "Pay or Die" might be the choice faced by many unable to afford service fees. On the day following the first White March, the Legislative Assembly approved Decree 1024 with 49 votes in favour of it; every party except for ARENA had supported the decree. The Decree was intended to assure that public health services could not be transformed into private bodies through any type of sale or outsourcing of services by private business. Despite the passing of 1024 in the Assembly, President Flores argued that it was unconstitutional and threatened to veto it. He later promised not to veto the Decree, but began making attempts to soften its anti-privatization stance. SIMETRISSS and STISSS remained on strike following the approval of the Decree as despite its approval by the Legislative Assembly it still seemed precarious due to Flores' reluctance to accept it. The second White March took place on October 23rd, this time with tear gas

released and police blocking roads to those outside the capital attempting to join the march (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 24th, 2002, p.2-3). On October 29th a number of protest actions took place across the country, in solidarity with the strikers. These included a student occupation at the University of El Salvador, another work stoppage by the MSPAS workers, and roads blockages throughout the country. Flores announced at the end of October that he would not veto Decree 1024, and discussions began to take place surrounding a possible process of negotiations between the strikers and the government.

Conflict occurred again in the beginning of November when it was discovered that some key wording in Decree 1024 was altered before it was to be sent to be ratified by the executive of the Legislative Assembly. The original wording stated that services that had already been outsourced could not be “*prorrogados*” [extended]. However, the wording was changed to state that they could not be “*derogados*” [repealed]. The ARENA members of the Legislative Assembly, when accused of altering the wording by other deputies from the FMLN and the PCN, argued that it was simply a typographical error (*La Prensa Grafica*, November 7th, 2002, p.8). Talks between the strikers and the government were suspended on November 9th, and Flores proposed more changes to the Decree, stating that Articles 3 and 5 were unconstitutional. Article 3 “Prohibits the privatization, outsourcing, sale of services, subcontracting or any process that leads to the transfer to private business the management of public health services and social security that is provided by the Salvadoran Institute of Social Security, the hospital network, and by the health providers of the Ministry of Health.” Article 5 stated that: “The contracts for the sale of services, outsourcing, subcontracting, among others, that are effective at

the present date cannot be extended under any circumstances and should be finalized on December 31st, 2002” (*La Prensa Grafica*, November 9th, 2002, p. 10). Flores was particularly opposed to Article 5, claiming that ending existing contracts with private business was in opposition to the constitution.

The talks broke down on November 9th due to the failure of the government and strikers to come to an agreement regarding the Decree. The third White March took place on the same day, with thousands of people participating in opposition to Flores’ attempts to modify the Decree. Despite Flores’ criticism, the PDC and PCN declared, on November 12th, that they would ratify Decree 1024, arguing that the text did not violate the constitution. On November 14th Decree 1024 was ratified by the Legislative Assembly with 55 votes. The strikers announced that they would continue to strike until those who had lost their jobs due to the strike were rehired by ISSS. On November 15th, five masked men with guns broke into STISSS leader Ricardo Monge’s house, stealing documents and threatening Monge and his family (CISPES Online: 2003). Repressive tactics such as this, the previously mentioned death threats, the prevention of supporters from attending marches were common throughout the strike.

Following the ratification of 1024, Flores concentrated on the wording of Article 5, stating that it would create a major crisis in ISSS if nothing could be sold to outside businesses. He also attacked 1024 and stated that the parties who supported it, especially the PCN, had “cheated” him. He called 1024 “a decree of nationalization, totally populist” and claimed that it would have very negative consequences (*La Prensa Grafica*, November 17th, 2002, p.3). There was a great deal of coverage in the press at this time on the crisis that would be brought on by Decree 1024. The criticism, however, was

exaggerated to make it seem as if absolutely no services could be taken on by private business. The actual intention of the decree was to assure that no services that could be provided by internal employees, such as food, security or cleaning, would be outsourced to private business. On November 26th, the doctors met with members of the business community to assure them that the government was trying to create a false crisis in ISSS, and that the only contracts that would need to end would be in the three above-mentioned areas (*La Prensa Grafica*, November 26th, 2002, p7). Despite this, the government continued to dwell on the impending crisis in waste disposal in ISSS. ISSS cancelled their contract with waste disposal firm TRANSAE, and made no arrangements to continue the service, while Flores focussed on the waste crisis being a result of Article 5. Guillermo Mata of the Medical College accused Flores of holding the waste on purpose in order to create the illusion of a crisis and to prove that Article 5 of 1024 was in fact dangerous (*La Prensa Grafica*, December 12th, 2002, p. 14). Despite the legal approval by the Assembly of Decree 1024, the Flores government attempted to create a false crisis and to mislead public opinion by not disposing of medical waste and claiming it as the result of Decree 1024.

On December 19th, the PCN changed its position to support ARENA and repealed Decree 1024 from law. This was prefaced with the PCN stating publicly that they originally supported the anti-privatization law under pressure from the strikers, and that they did not understand what they were signing. Two days later, Flores offered each of the striking doctors \$1500 to return to work. The Tripartite Commission rejected this as there was no assurance that privatization would not occur. Following the reversal of Decree 1024, organizations in support of the strike and the strikers themselves stated their

intention to increase protest actions and to continue the fight. Margarita Posada of the Citizens' Alliance against Healthcare Privatization stated "We will strengthen our organization and the expression of it in the streets because it is where we can express ourselves" (*La Prensa Grafica*, December 20th, 2002, p.8).

On December 24th, striking doctors introduced a new tactic by offering their first "medical brigade" in Soyapango, during which they gave free consultations to 267 patients outside of the hospital. Guillermo Mata stated that the intention of the medical brigade was to relieve the health care crisis and to demonstrate to the population that the strike was not against them. The doctors promised no more than four consultations an hour, in order to provide adequate service, and stated that the funds used to support the medical brigades came from private organizations and international support. These medical brigades continued through January, taking place in the Mejicanos area of San Salvador and Santa Ana, among other locations (*La Prensa Grafica*, December 31st, 2002, p.12). Despite the success of these medical brigades, ISSS refused to accept prescriptions given by striking doctors at their pharmacies. Following a medical brigade at the Oncology hospital in mid- January, for example, ISSS pharmacies refused to fill the prescriptions of cancer patients who had been treated by striking doctors (*La Prensa Grafica*, January 18th, 2003, p.20).

Throughout the next three months, the strike continued, with several protest actions, such as White Marches, other demonstrations and the occupation of medical centres. This period was also marked by the occupation by the national police of ISSS hospitals, showing more repressive tactics against the strikers. The police justified their occupation as a means of preventing the strikers from taking action within the hospitals.

The strikers and their supporters strongly criticised the police occupation, calling it the ‘militarization’ of hospitals (*La Prensa Grafica Online*, January 3rd, 2003,). The police presence in hospitals meant that much of the protest action took place in the streets, bringing it further into the public eye.

This strike period was also marked by government and ISSS efforts to minimise the effects of the strike, claiming that service in hospitals was close to normal, and that many of the strikers had been adequately replaced by doctors hired under the government’s Contingency Plan for the strike. For example, in the January 17th *La Prensa Grafica*, ISSS director Mauricio Ramos was quoted, stating that hospitals were running at 92% normal levels. In the same edition, however, Ricardo Alfaro of the Tripartite Commission stated that this was impossible and that, “these are methods to confuse the population and to give the image in these electoral moments that our movement is collapsing” (*La Prensa Grafica*, January 17th, 2003, p.35). These differing reports on the levels of service in the hospitals continued in the press, with Ramos stating that the normalcy of service meant that the ISSS authorities had no interest in negotiating with the strikers. Members of the Tripartite Commission, in the meantime, accused the authorities of hiring unqualified replacements to the striking doctors and therefore putting patients at risk (*La Prensa Grafica*, January 25th, 2003, p. 4). Significantly, in March the FMLN won a majority in the Legislative Assembly, winning 31 out of 84 seats. They also achieved significant success in municipal elections, winning mayoral seats in the major centres. It is argued that the population’s dissatisfaction with the government’s treatment of the strike and healthcare crisis was a significant contributor to the FMLN success (*CISPES Online*: March, 2003).

In early April, the doctors presented an Amnesty Bill to the government, demanding an end to the strike that included the rehiring of all strikers, that they receive back-pay for wages lost during the strike and suffer no reprisals. On April 1st, six doctors from SIMETRISS and the Medical College began a hunger strike to encourage the acceptance by the government of the Amnesty Bill. On April 10th, the Legislative Assembly, with a great deal of influence from the FMLN, passed amnesty for the strikers, responding to their labour demands and ending the hunger strike. On May 3rd, however, Flores vetoed the Bill, claiming that it was unconstitutional and illegal. He said that the Legislative Assembly “has no right to tell him what to do” and that strikers had no legal right to be reinstated when the strike had been declared illegal. According to Flores, 350 striking doctors had lost their jobs (*La Prensa Grafica*, May 3rd, 2003, p.2).

To this, Mata responded that the President was being dishonest, and that they had not originally been informed that they had lost their jobs. He argued that the labour code required that each worker be informed in writing of their dismissal, and that ISSS had simply pinned a list of names to the door of a hospital. He claimed that, in this case, they were not legally dismissed. The strikers also indicated that they were planning a great deal of protest activity. Margarita Posada indicated that they were “looking for methods that involve the massive participation of citizens” and that they were looking to increase ties with deputies from the CDC and PDC (*La Prensa Grafica*, May 4th, 2003, p.10). Throughout May, protest actions included the occupation, by STISSS, of the 1 de Mayo hospital, at which the doctors also held a medical brigade. The doctors also refused to negotiate with the government unless members of STISSS were included in the process. The government had been using ‘divide and conquer’ tactics, previously focussing only

on the doctors and offering them a package that did not include STISSS workers (CISPES Online: May 28th, 2003). Talks resumed on May 28th as the government and ISSS authorities agreed to allow STISSS to participate on equal terms with the Tripartite Commission. The Legislative Assembly, however, decided not to overrule the veto of the Amnesty Bill, which would have ended the strike by allowing all strikers to return to work.

On June 11th, 2003, the unions and the government reached an agreement, which was signed on June 13th, officially ending the strike. Although the agreements did not include every point that had been included in the original Amnesty Bill, it complied with the majority of issues requested by the unions in terms of labour rights. Under the June 13th Accords, the majority of doctors would be returned to their original positions, as would the majority of workers. All returning workers would receive six-month's back pay, although they were required to work overtime in order to receive it. At the conclusion of the strike 160 STISSS workers were facing criminal charges, most of which were dropped. The Accords stated however that a commission, made up of union, government and neutral mediators, would be required to decide whether these workers would receive the same benefits. Because many of these 160 workers included members of the STISSS Board of Directors and other important union activists, the unions were concerned that the government would use these charges to weaken the union. They declared that they would continue to be active until the charges were dropped and the workers were rehired (CISPES Online: June 11th, 2003). Despite the agreements, however, the government staged a lock-out of doctors, in the attempt to convince them to sign a new labour contract that would decrease their seniority privileges. The unions

persisted however, and were allowed to return to work in early July 2003. The majority of doctors were able to return to their original positions, while a number were given new positions in the public health system. Delays also occurred in the process of reinstating members of STISSS and in the process of reviewing the cases of the 160 workers facing charges.

Despite the failure of the Accords to satisfy all the demands of the unions, the strike can be considered successful. Although Decree 1024 was vetoed by Flores, the strike led to the formation of a commission, to include members of numerous sectors including the unions, to work on “healthcare modernization without privatization”. The strike did not end with a legally binding prohibition of privatization; however it did end with the intended inclusion of numerous sectors in the process of reform. The Commission formed following the strike was based upon an agreement that had not been kept following the 1999-2000 strike to form a similar body. On September 3rd, 2003, Flores announced the formation of the National Monitoring Commission for Integrated Health Reform. Nine sectors are represented on the Commission, composed of: then-Minister of Health Herbert Betancourt, two members from ISSS, including the Director Mauricio Ramos Falla, two representatives from the universities, one representative from the National Association for Private Business (ANEP), two representatives from the Medical College, two representatives from the doctors’ unions, including Guillermo Mata, two representatives from the workers’ unions, two representatives from the civil society sector, and two presidential representatives (*La Prensa Grafica Online*, September 4th, 2003). The formation of the Commission, and its inclusion of representatives from numerous sectors, including healthcare unions and civil society,

demonstrates a marked improvement to the process of health reform that was a direct result of the strike.

A brief discussion of the environment surrounding distribution of resources, the absence of participation in policy making, repression faced by the unions and their supporters and the situation of the mainstream media in El Salvador helps to establish the limits to democracy that continue to exist. In order to explore the ability of the movement against healthcare privatization in El Salvador to contribute to democratization, it is important to understand the context of each of the dimensions of democracy as means through which the movement might contribute to its strengthening. In the following chapter, each dimension will be explored in depth in relation to the actions and tactics of the movement during the period of September 2002 to June 2003. The ability of the movement to contribute to democratic quality will be analysed in an attempt to contribute to the discourse on social movements, democratization and structural change.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

The purpose of this research was to determine the ways in which the Salvadoran social movement against the privatization of healthcare was able to contribute to democratic strengthening by increasing participation, promoting socio-economic equity, and generating public awareness and debate. My main form of data collection was a content analysis of the coverage, by one of the major Salvadoran newspapers, of the strike. It also involved a qualitative analysis of the paid advertisements (*campos pagados*) placed by the healthcare unions and the other organizations that were part of the movement during the strike. Additionally, I conducted interviews with the press officers of the major unions involved in the strike.

I analysed the content of news coverage of the strike by a major Salvadoran daily paper, *La Prensa Grafica*. The analysis focuses on the coverage, from the period of September 2002- July 2003, by the paper of social movement actions and activities, as well as discussion of the privatization issue in the media. Included in the analysis are regular newspaper articles, editorials and interviews. I qualitatively analysed the nature of the coverage, examining the ways in which the issue of privatization and the actions and comments of the strikers and their supporters are presented in the articles. I examined the articles both as a record of the major events of the strike and as a means of determining the way in which the message of the strikers was presented in the mainstream media. That is, I used the articles as evidence of the strikers' ability to promote participation, socio-economic justice and public awareness and debate in such a way that these values reached the public.

While the articles in *La Prensa Grafica* provide information on how the strikers, their actions and their message were presented in the mainstream press, an analysis of the paid advertisements placed by movement organizations gives insight into the discourse of the movement itself. The *campos pagados* are analysed for the ways in which they display, or fail to display, a concern with the three variables of democratization. As they were published and paid for by the unions and their supporters during the strike, they provide an important representation of the language, priorities and responses of the movement during the strike period, as they wanted their message to be displayed to the public. The advertisements analysed are those published by The Salvadoran Institute for Social Security's Doctor's Union (SIMESTRISS), and the Institute's Worker's Union (STISSS), the Medical College, and Tripartite Commission, the membership organizations such as the Red Sinti Techan and the Citizens= Alliance Against Privatization and the Organizations of ISSS Patients. Of the thirty-nine paid advertisements analysed from the period of September 2002- July 2003, twenty-eight were published, at least in part, by the Medical College or Tripartite Commission. This is likely due to the fact that, by nature, the *campos pagados* require financial resources that may have been unavailable to other organizations.

I also analyse the *campos pagados* placed by the government and authorities. This allows for an understanding of the debate which took place between the movement and its supporters and the authorities through the means of the distinct forum of paid announcements in the paper. The nature of the authorities' *campos pagados*, their content and frequency is analysed for the way in which they discuss the strike, the strikers and their supporters, the issue of privatization and other issues surrounding the strike. The

comparison the nature and content of the strikers' and authorities' *campos pagados* provides important insight into the nature of the public debate between the two sides.

La Prensa Grafica, established in 1915, was chosen as a source of news coverage of the strike against privatization and the outcomes of the movement because it is recognized as an important source of information for the Salvadoran population. Literacy levels, while an issue, are at approximately 80% of the population over the age of 15 years in El Salvador (United Nations Human Development Report Online: El Salvador, 2003). While the news found in *La Prensa* is certainly not universally accessible, it serves as an appropriate research base in terms of its long history as a news source in the country and due to the large number of the population who may have access to the paper. Additionally, through paid announcements and press conferences, many of the organizations involved in the anti-privatization movement focused on the mainstream media as an important area through which to raise awareness and support. This will be seen in more detail in Chapter Five.

The importance of the mainstream press as a methodological tool can also be seen through the use of the media as a source by the Office of the Human Rights Ombudswoman. The documents from this office, which I use to inform this research, frequently cite the mainstream papers.² This demonstrates reliance by this office on the content of *La Prensa Grafica* as a source through which to gather information on

² Two examples are: Produradora para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos. (Mayo, 2003). A Tercer Informe Especial de la Señora PDDH, Dra. Beatrice Alamanni de Carrillo, sobre la problemática del ISSS respecto al cumplimiento del derecho a la salud en El Salvador". San Salvador, El Salvador: Office of the Human Rights Ombudswoman.

Mesa Permanente sobre el Derecho Humano a la Salud en El Salvador de la PDDH. (Marzo, 2004). A Fundamentos del Proceso de Reforma del Sector Salud en El Salvador@. San Salvador, El Salvador: Office of the Human Rights Ombudswoman.

healthcare reform, on the healthcare conflict and on the strike. The media information on the strike and healthcare issue was also drawn upon by a number of organizations that supported the movement by raising awareness internationally. Citizens in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) is one organization which published summary reports online of the strike situation, often drawing information from the mainstream press (CISPES Online: 2003). Similarly, the Centre for Exchange and Solidarity, which supports community-based trade in El Salvador, runs elections monitoring programs and has supported a number of anti-privatization efforts in El Salvador, employs a staff person who monitors the coverage by the mainstream press of events such as the 2002-2003 strike. It can be argued then that despite the fact that the mainstream newspapers in El Salvador do not have a universal audience, they are a legitimate source for the purpose of this research.

I did part of my research in July and August 2004 in San Salvador, El Salvador, where I conducted interviews with the press officers for the two major unions involved in the strike, the healthcare workers' Union of Workers in the Social Security Institute (STISSS) and the doctors= Union of Medical Workers in the Social Security Institute (SIMETRISSS). The interviewees were contacted initially by email, in which the research project was explained, and then contacted by phone. The interviews took place in person at the offices of the unions. Interviews were approximately thirty minutes, and were semi-structured. Interview questions included: the role of the press in the work of social movements such as the strike against health privatization; whether and how the unions used the media as part of the movement; the type of audience that the unions targeted through this work; whether they believe themselves to be successful in reaching

this audience; whether they believe that this work was successful in reaching political figures such as members of the Legislative Assembly; and whether they believe that using the media is an important part of a social movements= work.

The interviews with the representatives from STISSS and SIMETRISSS allowed for an understanding of the motivations of the unions in terms of the press and public awareness. They provided an understanding, as a compliment to the analysis of the *campos pagados* and the mainstream coverage in *La Prensa Grafica*, of the ways in which the movements perceive their ability to create public awareness, of what audience they target as most important and of their perception of the effectiveness of the media in terms of achieving their goals. The use of the media by the movements and the influence of the media on policy makers are relevant in terms of social movement outcomes and their broader implications for democracy. The ability of social movements to raise awareness of the issue of privatization for the general public is important in itself. Additionally, through the media, movements have the capacity to raise support among the population and among politicians for their cause. Ultimately, the ability of movements to use the media to raise public awareness and debate surrounding the privatization issue, despite obstacles in the mainstream press, is one variable that can be used to evaluate their ability to strengthen democracy.

In addition to the content analysis and data gathering in El Salvador, reports written by Salvadoran civil society organizations and the office of the Human Rights Ombudsperson were consulted. This allowed me to increase my understanding of the situation of the healthcare system in El Salvador prior to the strike, and to gain an understanding of the types of recommendations for reform that are believed, by the

above-mentioned bodies, to be most suitable to a country in which many people are living in extreme poverty. These reports are important for the establishment of the limits placed upon democracy in two ways. Primarily, the reports help to establish that the process by which the decision by government to privatize the Salvadoran Institute for Social Security (ISSS) was not inclusive to civil society, opposition parties or those paying into the system (*derechohabientes*). They also help to establish the need for a kind of reform that will increase access to healthcare by marginalized people, rather than making access to this vital social service more exclusive. The contents of these reports will be drawn upon in Chapter Five to provide the context of the case study.

Chapter 5: Analysis of the Impact of the Salvadoran Healthcare Workers Strike on Democratic Quality in El Salvador- Participation, Socio- Economic Equity and Public Debate

As was established in the preceding chapter, the health reform initiated by the Government of El Salvador was based upon the privatization and outsourcing of health services, and was initiated with little to no participation by doctors, health workers or Salvadoreans in general. In addition the actions of the government and ISSS during the nine-month strike were often repressive and showed reluctance to negotiate the establishment of a reform process that integrated various actors- not only those working in the healthcare system, but the millions of patients who require accessible and affordable healthcare. This suggests that the quality of democracy in El Salvador is limited. While the country does have a procedural democratic system in which citizens are able to elect officials and in which rule of law applies, there remains a great deal to be accomplished in terms of achieving broader democratic goals. It was argued that democracy can and should refer not only to procedure, but also values and practices such as extended political participation, socio-economic equity, and open and active public debate surrounding contentious issues that affect societies and their citizens. It was further suggested, based upon the literature on social movement outcomes that social movements have the ability to contribute to the strengthening of democracy. Drawing on the previously discussed literature on social movements and democracy, and on the case of the social movement against healthcare privatization in El Salvador, the following analysis will examine the extent to which the movement was able to strengthen democracy in the country.

The democracy strengthening effect of the strike will be assessed through a consideration of changes in political participation, socio-economic equity, and the generation of public awareness and debate. The analysis will be largely based upon Guingi and Sandoval (1998), who argue that social movements have the potential to contribute democratically in the context of electoral democracies. Guigni outlines the four elements of democracy as: “1) broad citizenship; 2) relatively equal citizenship; 3) binding consultation of citizens to state policies and personnel; 4) protection of citizens, especially members of minorities, from arbitrary state action” (Guigni, 1998, XX). Additionally, Sandoval argues that the potential for democratic contribution exists “when social movements defending citizenship rights explicitly demand and gain the extension of one or more of the four elements of democracy (as outlined by Guigni)” (Sandoval, 1998: p173). These four elements of democracy will be used as a basis for the analysis, with more specific criteria applying to each variable. As stated by Sandoval, the ability of social movements to contribute democratically is of utmost importance to this analysis – he states that social movements have the may contribute democratically when they ask for and achieve one or more of Guigni’s elements of democracy. This analysis will draw primarily on the demand by the movement surrounding these elements, and will also examine their success in terms of achievement of these goals. Democratic strengthening as a long and difficult process is important, and this analysis is largely concerned with whether the Salvadoran movement against healthcare privatization demonstrates the ability for democratic strengthening in a particular time period, recognising the longer process as an important reality. I will analyse, using the three dimensions of democracy, whether the movement can be seen to be successful in making a contribution to a *process*

that is long and which cannot be achieved in a matter of months. An analysis of the achievement by the movement of making a contribution to this process is of great importance in terms of the study of social movement outcomes and democracy as it refers to the very question, discussed in the literature, of whether social movements can be part of democratic strengthening. This analysis aims to explore the ability of the Salvadoran movement against healthcare privatization in terms of making demands for greater participation, greater socio-economic equity and generation of public awareness and debate, as a means of evaluating whether or not they were able to make a contribution to democratic strengthening. Taking into account the movement's ability to contribute to democratic changes vis-à-vis the three dimensions of democracy, any barriers to success will also be discussed.

The analysis is based upon the actions and tactics of the social movement during the nine-month strike, and on the response by the authorities to these actions, with research focusing on *La Prensa Grafica's* coverage of the strike between September 2002 and July 2003. Information on the striker's actions and tactics was also obtained from the strike coverage by the NGO Citizens in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). The analysis also focuses on the paid advertisements, or *campos pagados*, placed by the Medical College, the Tripartite Commission, SIMETRISSS, STISSS and other organizations such as the Citizens' Alliance against Healthcare Privatization and by the Government of El Salvador, the ISSS and the business sector. The *campos pagados* allow for an analysis of discourse used by the movement itself, which is an important compliment to the coverage provided by other sources. By examining the movement and counter-movement *campos pagados*, they also allow for an increased understanding of

the interaction between the messages of the movement and the authorities. Finally, the analysis draws upon the interviews conducted with social movement members largely surrounding the democratic dimension of public awareness and debate.

Political Participation

Political participation is one variable through which the ability of social movements to contribute to democracy can be examined. It can be argued that political participation is a democratic value in and of itself, and that it can also lead to the strengthening of other democratic values, such as socio-economic equity and public debate. When examining political participation itself as an aspect of democracy, several sources, discussed in Chapter Three, suggest means by which social movements can contribute.

The most obvious way in which the Salvadoran doctors' and health workers' movement contributed to democracy was through their success in engaging in and increasing civic participation in contentious politics. There were six White Marches throughout the strike, and numerous other protests, marches and demonstrations in support of the strikers and their cause. The White Marches are particularly important, as they generated enormous support and, through the wearing of white to symbolize the medical profession, were unique and extremely recognizable. In its coverage of the first White March, which took place on October 16th, 2002, *La Prensa Grafica* reports: " 'No to privatization' was the shout of thousands of participants in the White March, led by unionized doctors from the public sector and the Salvadoran Institute of Social Security". The article goes on to report that the march was also attended by "students from the University of El Salvador and groups of supposed sick people" (*La Prensa Grafica*, Oct.

16th, 2002: 6). An additional article on the White March stated that doctors from various cities and towns throughout the country, such as San Miguel, Santa Ana and Sonsonate, participated in the march. The paper stated, based upon figures given by the national police, that approximately five thousand people participated in the March, while CISPES indicates 50,000 people participated (CISPES Online, 2003). This certainly indicates a great deal of civic participation in contentious politics.

The coverage of the second White March, which took place on October 23rd, 2002, also helps to demonstrate the large amount of participation by the citizenry in the arena of contentious politics. *La Prensa* reports that Guillermo Mata Bennett, then president of the Medical College, stated: “If this is not a response by the people against privatization, I don’t know what the Government is waiting for to not veto the Decree [1024].” The same article indicates that the numbers of those attending the march vary according to the source, and that international news agencies estimated between 50 and 80 thousand, while the police reported only 5 thousand in attendance. SIMETRISSS reported that 200, 000 people participated. These numbers were very impressive, especially considering the claim, by several sources including the Human Rights Ombudswoman, that the police blocked a large number of supporters from entering the capital to participate in the march (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 24th, 2002: 2-3). The White Marches continued, with growing support, throughout the strike. Reports by CISPES place nearly 100, 000 Salvadorans at the fourth, fifth and sixth White Marches.

The White Marches were both symbolic of the struggle for access to healthcare and very real demonstrations of the level of popular support for the strikers and their goals. Throughout the strike there were numerous other protest activities that were

successful in generating popular participation. On October 29th, for example, a huge day of protest took place across El Salvador in opposition to the government's proposal for health reform and in defence of Decree 1024. *La Prensa Grafica* reports that roads across the country were closed to traffic in the early morning in order for the protests to take place. The article states, "The protagonists were diverse social entities, human rights associations, ecologists, non-governmental organizations, municipal employees, market vendors, peasant organizations, churches and the general public" (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 30th, 2002: 11). This demonstrates the diversity of support, in some cases by groups not generally active in protest activities, that the strikers were able to generate and to mobilize into public demonstrations of participation. Similar protests took place throughout the nine-month period of the strike, in which thousands of people were mobilized against the privatization of healthcare.

Participation in the protest activities of the strike were promoted and encouraged by the unions, in part through their paid advertisements or *campos pagados*. For example, on December 5th, 2002 the Tripartite Commission of the *Gremio Médico* ran a paid advertisement promoting the fourth White March. Entitled "We Defend the Law against the Privatization of Healthcare", it urged the general public to participate in the march. It states: "Salvadoran people, they want to steal your Law. The Medical Guild invites you to raise your voice in defence of your Right to Health, accompany us..." (*La Prensa Grafica*, December 5th, 2002: 58).

Also demonstrative of the movements' use of *campos pagados* to generate participation, is a *campo pagado* run on April 29th, 2003, by the Tripartite Commission. They argue that the Medical Guild has been fighting hard to defend the right to health of

the Salvadoran people and outline several instances of corruption that have occurred by the government and by ISSS. They also criticized the failure of the Court of Accounts to investigate corruption in spending, the veto of Decree 1024 and the reluctance of the government and ISSS to negotiate an end to the conflict due to their continued interest in privatizing healthcare. The spot urges people to remain active in defence of their right to health and to denounce the actions of ISSS. They claim that with the money that has been channelled into corrupt ventures ISSS could have bought medicine, modern equipment and avoided privatization. They state: “We have gone out to realise actions in the street, White Marches, legislative actions, alliances with all social sectors, actions towards the Senate and Congress of the United States, and a hunger strike in order to fight against the privatization of healthcare”. This statement is directed to the “Salvadoran people” and urges them to remain active in the fight against privatization (*La Prensa Grafica*, April 29th, 2003: 46).

Despite the ability of the movement to generate massive public participation in protest events, they faced challenges posed by frequent repressive actions by the authorities. As was previously mentioned, the national police blocked roads, which prevented people from other areas from joining the second White March in San Salvador. The same article reports on tear gas having been used by police against those in attendance (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 24th, 2002). A January article reports on the seizure, by the national police, of the Hospital Especialidades. The police seized the hospital from the strikers, using tear gas and force. The strikers threatened to increase their actions in opposition to “the militarization of hospitals”. They threatened to increase their protest actions and take them to the streets. They also received support from the

doctors who were working in the hospital, who threatened to reduce their working hours (La Prensa Grafica Online, Jan. 3rd, 2003). This is an interesting case in which repression definitely exists through the actions of the police, but has the effect of generating more protest action by the strikers. Additionally, the seizure of the hospital by the police meant that future protest action would have to take place more publicly. In this case, repression was a definitely impediment to the strikers, but also served to generate alternate forms of public political participation. The repression by the authorities, in one sense, was a significant barrier to the success of the strike as it demonstrated the existence of anti-democratic tactics by the state despite, and because of, the participation brought on by the movement and its supporters. The repression, however, seems to have strengthened the movement as it led to increased protest action and the movement of social movement tactics into more public arenas. The relationship between the social movement, public participation and repression demonstrates a multidimensionality that indicates a strong social movement attempt to reduce repression, but also demonstrates the strength of the state in this capacity, indicating continued limitations to democracy. Repressive actions continued throughout the strike. For example, for its first plenary session of 2003, the Legislative Assembly increased security so that the strikers could not get into the building. This action shows the political process becoming more closed, while the seizure by police of more hospitals, including the 1 de Mayo and the Medico- Quirúrgico Hospital demonstrated active repression against the strikers. Other incidence of repression, as discussed in the previous chapter, included the frequent use of tear gas against protesters and the death threats received by strikers throughout the nine month

period. This indicates that, despite significant public participation generated by the movement, repression did not diminish as a result of the movement.

The strikers' democratic contribution in terms of generating active civic participation in contentious politics can be considered successful due to the large numbers and various organizations and individuals who participated in protest actions. The strikers were certainly able to increase participation and to reach potential in terms of helping to expand broad citizenship through massive participation. The presence of repression in various forms, however, makes it clear that despite the potential of the strikers to make a democratic contribution in this sense, there is still much work to be done to achieve the democratic goal of participation within the Salvadoran society. Therefore, it can be argued that, in terms of contributing to the democratic dimension of participation through active civic engagement in contentious politics, the movement certainly succeeded in generating numbers and active citizen support within the strike period. In terms of making change, or of definitive success, however, the repressive tactics employed by Salvadoran authorities throughout the strike demonstrate that despite the contribution of the strikers, much more time and effort are needed for any real change to the nature of this democratic dimension. The second aspect of the democratic dimension of participation is the promotion by social movements of participation by numerous sectors in the policy process; in this case these sectors include doctors, healthcare workers, civil society groups and patients. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the process of reform initiated by the Government of El Salvador did not involve the inclusion of numerous sectors, and was exclusively made up of the Government, ISSS and MSPAS and the business sector. This was one of the grounds on which the strike was

based- not only are privatization policies exclusive in that they create systems in which the poor have less access to services, but the actual process of policy formation is not based upon civic consultation or any true democratic process. A major demand of the Salvadoran strike was to promote a process of health reform that was inclusive to numerous sectors. This was one objective behind the protest activities that were discussed above. Margarita Posada, spokesperson for the Citizens' Alliance against the Privatization of Healthcare, for example, stated in reference to the blocking of roads in protest: "This is a warning for President Flores, so that he remembers that he was elected by millions of people and not by seven rich families whose interests he must protect" (*La Prensa Grafica*, Oct, 22, 2002: 10).

An important means of determining the priorities and demands of the movement is by examining their own statements, largely made through *campos pagados*. On October 22nd, for example, STISSS published a paid advertisement which rejects Flores' proposal for the health reform, stating that it represents the commoditization of health. STISSS also say that Flores' reluctance to solve the health crisis makes him responsible for the effects of the strike on patients. They call on the Flores government to: "Generate conditions for an immediate dialogue and negotiation, with the goal of going beyond the deficiencies of the health system, with the participation of doctors, workers and those that use the system..." (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 22nd, 2002: 50). This displays the prioritization, by the workers' union, of including doctors, health workers and those who use the system in the policy process. This concern with inclusive healthcare reform reflects Guigni's (1998) democratic element of "biding consultation of citizens to state

policies and personnel”. The content of this announcement therefore suggests that this democratic element was a priority of the movement and a demand of the strike.

Reflecting the same priority, a November 2nd, 2002, paid announcement by the Medical College published in *La Prensa Grafica* was extremely critical of the president’s October 31st speech regarding the health crisis and the reform process. The announcement argues that Flores was not clear in his intention to halt privatization or on his intention to pursue reform that would be inclusive or participatory. The Medical College calls for a guarantee by the government of El Salvador not to engage in any form of privatization, including outsourcing of services, and to support a negotiation and reform process that involves all relevant parties. They call for the formation of a monitoring commission that should, “...incorporate social participation, the only guarantee of constructing a proposal that benefits the health of all Salvadorans” (*La Prensa Grafica*, November 2nd, 2002: 41). This demonstrates the prioritization by the striking doctors of a reform process that is inclusive of numerous sectors of society. This suggests that the movement, though its promotion of this type of reform, was able to promote the democratic value of citizen participation in decision making.

The unions attempted to promote inclusion through events advertised in *campos pagados*. Meetings were held for members of the medical community and health workers, and were promoted by the Medical College on February 25th, 2003. The *campo pagado*, on this day, invites people to attend open forums on the following topics: 1) corruption under the Contingency Plan; 2) the impact of free trade agreements on healthcare; 3) advancements toward privatization in MSPAS; 4) analysis of the proposals for reform in the health sector as raised by various political parties. The advertisement invites doctors

and workers to “participate in debate and the construction of alternatives” for each of the above themes (*La Prensa Grafica*, February 25th, 2003: 49). These meetings are addressed to doctors and workers and represent a desire for an inclusive approach to the discussion of reform and the participation of the broad membership of the unions in the construction of alternatives. Like the above example, this represents the prioritization of the movement of an inclusive process of reform.

Regular news articles from the strike period also demonstrate the movement’s prioritization of inclusion. For example, an October article cites the intention of strikers and solidarity groups to shake the country with protests if Flores should refuse to comply with the demands of the movement. It claims that the strikers and their supporters only intend to participate in an “integrated reform process”. This demonstrates active civic participation in support of a more inclusive process of policy formation (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 30th, 2002: 11).

It can certainly be argued that the strikers prioritized, as a persistent demand of the strike, an integrated process of healthcare policy formation that would include the participation of numerous sectors including doctors, health workers, civil society and patients. While they certainly promoted this ideal, their success in generating a change in the policy process is questionable. The Medical College certainly made clear their demands that policy reform that affects the lives of people should involve those people in the process of policy formation. In practice however, the barriers faced by the movement to actualizing this type of participation were significant. The formation of the Monitoring Commission, as part of the accords that ended the strike, which included members from civil society and from the unions can be seen as an immediate achievement of the strikers

toward a more inclusive type of policy formation. The actual actions of this Commission, however, remain to be seen in practice (*Diario CoLatino*, May 24th, 2006: 3). Therefore, it could be argued that, in terms of this aspect of contributing to democracy through public participation, the strikers were partially successful in terms of making the demand and achieving the formation of the Monitoring Commission. Their public promotion of the value of inclusive, participatory policies was important. The success of the movement in raising the importance of inclusive and participatory policy processes is evident; The promotion of this democratic value was evident, and the initial formation of the Monitoring Commission, at the time of the strike accords, demonstrated the recognition by the authorities of inclusion and participation as a clear demand of the strikers. The failure of the authorities to put the Commission into action since the end of the strike, however, shows that the movement did not fully achieve success in this area. The barriers put in place by the government to an actual participatory reform process are significant, and despite their recognition through the formation of the Commission of the value of participation, their failure to follow through demonstrates the continuance by the government of “token” approaches to participation despite the movement’s efforts.

Socio-Economic Equity

The second variable on which the ability of social movements to contribute to democratization is based is their promotion of the values of socio-economic equity in a given society. As discussed in Chapter 3, Monshipouri argues that: “[democracy] includes structures that promote socio-economic opportunity. Democracy... has applications in the economic, social and cultural spheres: it implies some degree of equality” (Monshipouri, 1995: 15-16). It was also argued in Chapter Four, based upon the

experience of other privatizations in El Salvador and health privatization elsewhere in Latin America, that privatization limits accessibility to services by those who are not able to pay for them.

Guigni identifies one of the elements of democracy as being “relatively equal citizenship”. This can be interpreted to apply both to the ability of citizens to participate on relatively equal terms in the political process, and also to the ability of citizens to enjoy relatively equal benefits of citizenship. It was argued in Chapter Three that the extent of democracy in countries where a vast disparity exists between rich and poor is limited. Further, I argued that policies, such as privatization of social services, which include or exclude people from services based upon their ability to pay, are contrary to democratic values. Therefore, it can be suggested that when social movements oppose policies that pose a challenge to socio-economic equity, and promote alternatives which seek to improve conditions, that they also have the ability to contribute to democracy. Again, however, when measuring success, the promotion of values is different than the actual structural change that is required to change a given society. Therefore, social movements may contribute to the promotion of the values of socio-economic equity over a short time, while the actual increase of socio-economic equity may be a much longer and more difficult process.

Much like the promotion of the value of inclusive civic participation can be drawn upon to understand the movement’s approach to democratic values, so can the promotion of the values of equity and economic inclusion. Again, the discourse of the movement itself, in addition to the coverage received in the mainstream press of the movements’

actions and tactics, can help to understand its approach toward the harms of privatizing health in a country marked by high levels of poverty.

On October 3rd, 2002, the Tripartite Commission of the Medical Guild placed a *campo pagado* in which medical specialists announce their full support of the doctors who were already on strike. They argue that their support is generated by the continued reality of the terrible conditions in the country's hospitals, and the need for a reform process without privatization. They state their intention to see only patients whose lives are in immediate danger in order to show support for the strikers. They state: "Daily we see patients die by circumstances that, with a small amount of seriousness and responsibility on the part of those that are in charge of establishing sanitary policies at the national level, could be avoided". (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 3rd, 2002: 60). This shows their recognition of the avoidable nature of many of the illnesses that affect El Salvador. As was outlined in the previous chapter, many of the most common illnesses are poverty related- caused by poor sanitation and access to clean environments. For this reason, and as demonstrated by this announcement, the reform process must take place at least partially at the preventative level to have an impact on the majority of Salvadoran people. This indicates a prioritization of a reform process that prioritizes changes that would benefit the majority of Salvadoreans whose health is jeopardized due to conditions of poverty. This demonstrates a prioritization in the discourse of the strikers of values of socio-economic inclusion.

The formation by the strikers of the bill that became Decree 1024, "The State Guarantee of Health and Social Security", was based upon the prohibition of privatization and outsourcing in order to protect citizens' right to health. The title of the decree

reflected the belief that the state was responsible for providing its citizens with health and security benefits. On October 10th, in a news article on the debate over the Decree in the Legislative Assembly, the Secretary General of SIMETRISSS, Ricardo Alfaro, is quoted as stating: “The outsourcing of services will have as its consequences unemployment, an increase in costs and a lack of vigilance for the quality of those services”(La Prensa Grafica, October 10th, 2002: 7). The strikers took numerous actions, with the support of thousands of people, to defend this Decree from presidential veto. The formulation and defence of 1024 was an active way in which the social movement sought not only to protest privatization, but also to contribute to making laws at the legislative level that would protect Salvadorans’ access to healthcare. By ratifying the Decree, the government would be recognizing its responsibility to provide for its citizens in the area of health. The proposal of 1024, therefore, reflected a desire by the movement to increase the government’s commitment to provide equally for its citizens.

The public representation of the strikers and their supporters also demonstrated an obvious concern for socio-economic equity. The slogan of the White Marches “Pay or Die” is a succinct and attention-grabbing means of demonstrating the effect that the strikers and their supporters believed that privatization would have on the population. It demonstrates the choice that many people would face under a private system- to pay for health services and receive them or to go without and face the consequences. Another common slogan used by the movement was “Health is not merchandise”. This was another brief way of opposing the belief that health is an appropriate arena through which to make a profit. Again, these slogans reflect the prioritization of a healthcare system that does not exclude the poor and make access to service impossible for those that cannot

pay. The slogans used by the movement demonstrate a commitment by the strikers to an equitable system of health.

One tactic through which the striking doctors demonstrated their belief in health as a public, not-for-profit human right was by offering free medical brigades during the strike. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, on December 24th, 2002, the first medical brigade took place in Soyapango. An article in *La Prensa Grafica* reports that approximately 70 doctors offered free medical to close to 280 patients. Guillermo Mata of the Medical College stated that the doctors would only attend to a maximum of four patients an hour, in order to assure quality healthcare. The consultations were mainly in the areas of urology, ophthalmology and other specialized fields. Mata also explained that funding for the free treatments had been received from commercial donations and international support, and had not been taken from ISSS funds (*La Prensa Grafica*, December 26th, 2002: 10) Through the remainder of December 2002, and into January, 2003, these free consultations took place in numerous locations throughout the country.

By offering the medical brigades, the striking doctors put their anti-privatization discourse and their belief in universal and accessible healthcare into action. They were able to create a social movement tactic that was public, visible and political, while simultaneously providing a real service to people in need. They demonstrated that they were willing to act on the principles of equality that they were continually claiming should apply to social services such as health. The brigades were a visible, action-based statement of a commitment to providing free healthcare. They contradicted the values that underlie the justifications for privatization – that healthcare is part of the market and therefore subject to open competition and “consumer choice”. Through the medical

brigades, doctors not only provided free consultations, but also did so without receiving pay themselves. The brigades were likely quite successful in raising public opinion towards the strikers as they showed them not to be neglectful of patient well-being. The brigades, therefore, were a particularly powerful means of demonstrating the strikers' firm commitment to opposing a policy that they believed would be exclusive and detrimental to the Salvadoran population.

The anti-privatization movement demonstrated its concern with socio-economic justice through its opposition to exclusive healthcare policies, as demonstrated through their use of slogans such as "Pay or Die". It also demonstrated its opposition to exclusive policies and to the sale of social services through its proposal and defence of the Anti-Privatization Law (Decree 1024) and through its public statements regarding the need for health reform that would work for, rather than against, Salvadorans. Finally, it demonstrated its commitment to universal healthcare access through the medical brigades, offering free medical consultations to patients. The movement against health privatization, therefore, promoted the value of socio-economic equity. By halting Flores' first proposal for health reform, and through the initial acceptance of Decree 1024 by the Legislative Assembly, the movement achieved short-term successes towards the promotion of this dimension of democracy.

Much like the discussion of the promotion of participation, however, the movement's contribution to the value of socio-economic justice at the end of the strike is less concrete. The medical brigades certainly promoted this practice in the short term. As stated above the halting of the initial proposal and Decree 1024 were also concrete victories. The conclusion of the strike with the agreement to pursue reform without

privatization can also be seen as an immediate outcome in terms of socio-economic equity. However, the participation of numerous groups in the reform process has yet to be seen and it is certain that the privatization agenda will not disappear as a reality in El Salvador. The movement, it may be argued, promoted the democratic value of socio-economic justice. However, the creation of lasting, structural change regarding the right to access health by all people, thus enhancing the health and well being of the population, is a much longer process. It may be argued that the movement was successful within the scope of the nine-month strike in actively and publicly promoting the democratic value of socio-economic equity, therefore making a contribution toward the strengthening of democracy. The actual structural changes required for this dimension of democracy to become an accepted part of the society and a priority for government, however, is a much longer battle.

Promotion of Public Awareness and Debate

The third democratic principle on which the movement's ability to make a contribution to democracy is being assessed here is their ability to promote public awareness and debate surrounding the issue of privatization. Sandoval, as part of his discussion of the ways in which social movements can contribute to democracy, claims that they can do so when they, "...introduce into the political arena proactive demands challenging the prerogatives of power holders and their sustaining elites through direct confrontation of a sort seldom advocated by the more institutionalized elites" (Sandoval, 1998: 173). That is, when movements are able to bring issues into the realm of political debate that may not necessarily be raised or defended to the same extent by opposition parties, they are able to contribute to democracy.

By bringing issues into political debate, movements may also simultaneously bring them into the public arena. The debate over contentious issues, although it may be political, is also very public, largely due to the coverage it receives in the media. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the media in El Salvador, while having made substantial progress since the war years, is not always open to opinion that challenges the interest of business or government. Therefore, the ability of the movement to raise the issue of privatization in such a way that it received coverage by the mainstream media can be seen as an accomplishment. Melucci and Lyrra claim that the way in which social movement actions are presented in the mass media is "...a measure of the capacity of a given society to process its own conflicts in a more or less 'democratic' fashion" (Melucci and Lyrra: 1998, 219). Therefore, the coverage by the media of the movement will be examined as one way in which the movement may have contributed to democracy through the promotion of public awareness and debate.

The media is certainly the most obvious way through which a movement's goals and issues can become subject for public debate. Movements, however, also take public actions that encourage debate and promote awareness that have little to do with media coverage. Touraine, for example, argues that, "democratic culture cannot exist without a reconstruction of public space or a return to political debate". That is, when a movement brings an issue into the open in a society, through marches demonstrations and other actions, it is making a claim on public space. Similarly, if a movement can successfully create a public debate that involves the active engagement of citizenry and the political elite, they may be considered to have democratizing ability. The promotion of this public

space and political debate by the movement will also be drawn upon for the discussion of how they may have contributed to this democratic value.

An examination of *campos pagados* placed by the movement and by the authorities during the strike will help to analyse the movement's ability to raise awareness and engage in debate. By looking at the discourse of the movement itself, as it appears in the mainstream press, we can understand the ways in which the movement presented their anti-privatization goals. Additionally, by looking at the statements made by the authorities through the same means, we can understand the nature of the debate between both sides. Throughout the strike period (September 2002 to June 2003), 137 *campos pagados* appeared in *La Prensa Grafica*. The announcements can be broken down into categories according to who paid for them. With the exception of the category of "Authorities/ Counter Movement" all were in support of the strikers and their cause. The placement of the *campos pagados* is as follows: University Sector: 9; Medical Associations by Specialization: 34; by other Central American associations: 2; national opposition groups and non- governmental organizations: 18; The Medical Sector (Tripartite Commission, The Medical College, SIMETRISS, STISS: 29; Authorities/ Counter Movement (GOES, ISSS, MSPAS, the Business Sector, other political parties): 45. This analysis is particularly concerned with the discourse of the Medical Sector and Authorities/ Counter Movements categories, as they represent the main actors in the conflict.

On September 26th, shortly after the strike began, SIMETRISS placed an announcement in which they state that due to the government and ISSS authorities' refusal to negotiate, and because of the repression towards doctors by these authorities,

the union held a meeting on September 23rd. At this meeting, the union concluded that, among other things, the government was not treating the doctors fairly, and was not concerned with patient well being. SIMETRISSS accuses the government of creating a crisis in the ISSS hospitals, and declares their intention to remain firm in their anti-privatization stance. They state that all recent government actions, including creating a false crisis to justify the outsourcing of services, and attempts to create labour instability, "...shows clearly that the authorities of the Institution have the intention of putting forward a gradual plan for privatization of health services that will render the same services inaccessible for the *derechohabiente* population." They further state that if, after 72 hours of printing this announcement, the government and ISSS do not guarantee to stop outsourcing of services and to end reprisals against the strikers, that they will cease all work and place the responsibility for patient well being on the authorities. (*La Prensa Grafica*, September 26th, 2002: 54). This announcement contains a public rejection of privatization by the union, and also demonstrates the intention of reporting to the public and to the authorities the results of meetings held by the union. It also places negotiations and demands in the public eye, calling attention to the strikers' objections to certain government and ISSS actions and raises awareness for the public of the causes and processes of the strike.

Another paid announcement, by the Tripartite Commission, on December 18th, 2002 is very critical of ARENA and the business sector. It accuses them of boycotting Decree 1024 and of creating a false crisis in the health sector in order to begin their "reprivatization" project. They argue that the only interest of the government is to help the business class make more money and that only the elite would benefit from healthcare

privatization. They also give a list of points in defence of Decree 1024. The announcement states: “The authorities created an artificial chaos using methods like the accumulation of garbage, closing for profit-clinics, not buying medication and other services that the law permits and through these methods they are looking to reverse the State Guarantee of Health and to privatize health services.” (*La Prensa Grafica*, December 18th, 2002: 60). This announcement is an overt criticism of business and the ARENA government, and is also a direct statement of the doctors’ strong opposition to privatization. It seeks to publicly reject the acts of the authorities while defending Decree 1024 and the right to public healthcare. This is a very obvious example of the union successfully bringing the issue of contention into the realm of public awareness.

A campo pagado, appearing in *La Prensa Grafica* on February 17th, 2003 also increases public awareness regarding the reform process. It invites members of the Medical Guild, health workers and Salvadoran society in general to attend two public forums. The first involves the presentation of evidence of corruption that occurred before and during ISSS’s Contingency Plan, as presented by the Tripartite Commission to the Public Prosecutor, Office of the Human Rights Ombudswoman and the Legislative Assembly in a document called “From Hope to Lunacy”. This title was a play on the title of the 1992 document that accompanied the peace accords “From Lunacy to Hope”, and compared many of the government’s actions during the strike to civil war era repression. The second meeting was to be a general assembly of doctors to discuss the theme of “Advances in the Transitional Plan to Privatize ISSS and MSPAS” (*La Prensa Grafica*, February 17th, 2003: 71). The invitation of the public to these forums demonstrated a desire, among the strikers, that the public be aware of the nature of the conflict between

the strikers and authorities, and of the proposed process of reform. Therefore, although this appeared primarily in a paid announcement, it also reflects an action taken by the movement to raise awareness by inviting the public, workers and doctors to be actively involved in learning about the government's actions and the reform process.

A final example from the *campos pagados* that demonstrates the movements' ability to raise public awareness can be seen in an announcement placed by the Commission of Doctors on Hunger Strike on April 10th, 2003. They argue that the government and ISSS have not adequately cooperated with the demands for a resolution to the strike (such as the original Amnesty Decree) and have resisted the proper re-incorporation of the doctors into the system. They ask the people to remain vigilant against proposals for resolutions that will in fact deepen the healthcare crisis and "cause more deterioration for the health of the *derechohabiente* population." They ask the public not to be convinced by a solution that appears to be resolving the crisis but actually will increase it. It asks them to be sure to watch for a resolution that remains true to the original objective of the struggle (*La Prensa Grafica*, April 10th, 2003: 73). This demonstrates movement's ability to increase public understanding for the motivations behind the hunger strike, and to generate awareness surrounding the process of strike negotiation. It also obviously reflects the attempt by the movement to generate support during the negotiations, and to remind the public of the initial goals of the movement. This announcement attempts to raise awareness in order to increase support and understanding for the movement and its actions.

The *campos pagados*, as can be seen by the examples discussed, demonstrate the ability of the movement to reach the public in its own words. That is, the paid

announcements allow the movement to make statements that are not corrupted or ignored by the agenda of the mainstream press, and which allow them to fully respond to and place demands upon the authorities. The *campos pagados* certainly show the ability of the movement to raise awareness in the public realm regarding the issues surrounding the strike. Furthermore, through the paid announcements, the movement was able to publicly respond to government actions and statements and to appeal for popular support. This demonstrates that the announcements were not only useful in allowing the movement to raise issues, but also in allowing for a certain amount of public debate to take place as the movement could publish their responses in their own discourse.

The paid announcements allowed the movement opportunities for generating awareness and afforded them the capacity to engage in debate in the forum of the media. There are also a number of limitations to using this type of communication. By nature they require financial resources and are not as visible in the newspapers as are standard articles. Of the *campos pagados* printed by the Medical Sector, 29 were at least in part published by the Medical College or the Tripartite Commission. This shows the possibility that other organizations, including STISSS and SIMESTRISSS, had fewer resources with which to publish the paid announcements. The announcements were always in the back sections of the paper, sometimes around pages 40 or 50, but often around page 60 to 70. This means that they might not receive the same attention as the standard articles published in the front of the paper.

The *campos pagados* of the unions also had to compete with similar announcements by the Government of El Salvador, the ISSS, the business sector and other counter movement actors. The statements of the counter movement parties are

clearly part of the debate that existed within the *campo pagado* forum, allowing the movement and the authorities to respond to one another in their own words. The issue of resources, however, may have limited the movement in terms of its ability to compete with the paid announcement of the authorities. It is important to look at the types of messages printed by this sector to understand the nature of the debate and the extent to which the movement faced obstacles to disseminating its own message.

Government and Counter Movement Messages

The *campos pagados*, compared to the mainstream news articles, were a forum for both the movement and the authorities to be more candid in their criticism of one another. As was discussed above, the movement's paid announcements were highly critical of the Flores government and of ISSS authorities and allowed for the movement to bring this criticism into the public eye. The Government of El Salvador published a *campo pagado* on November 28th, 2002 in which it urged the doctors to go back to work and argued that their demands had already been met by the acceptance by the Legislative Assembly of Decree 1024. It claimed that the strikers were very inflexible, while the government had been highly accommodating (*La Prensa Grafica*, November 28th, 2002: 15). Another government announcement, printed on December 6th, entitled "Proposal for the Strikers to Humanize the Strike" was very critical of the strikers and their actions. It listed several acts of the strike and asked the strikers to stop them. For example, it stated: "taking the workers and doctors hostage that are attending to patients". It makes the strikers sound criminal and neglectful. (*La Prensa Grafica*, December 6th, 2002, 96).

A common type of announcements placed by the authorities from ISSS was to create *campos pagados* that looked, in format, like regular news articles. They could

often only be distinguished by the name of ISSS printed in tiny font at the bottom of the page. Many of these announcements contained interviews with Salvadoran citizens who were critical of the strikers and their demands. For example, on April 9th, 2003, ISSS printed a *campo pagado* of this format with interviews with *derechohabientes* who were against paying salaries to the strikers. It contains sub-headings such as “Seven Months of Paid Vacation”. (*La Prensa Grafica*, April 9th, 2003: 22). The format used by ISSS, of regular news articles, could easily be mistaken by readers for a regular news story.

The counter-movement *campos pagados*, particularly those placed by the government, reflect some general themes. The strike is frequently presented as illegal, while the strikers themselves are often presented as immoral, with a disregard for the well-being of patients and for their obligations as healthcare professionals. Additionally, the *campos pagados* attempt to make the strike seem like it is in popular disfavour and that the majority of Salvadorans oppose the strike. The strike is referred to as a labour issue, with little reference to the issue of health privatization. While the strikers are portrayed as inflexible, the government is portrayed as willing to negotiate and flexible.

While research on the effectiveness of the government *campos pagados* on popular opinion or in terms of the strike outcome was not conducted, several speculations can be made. The resources possessed by the government and business sector, as discussed above, may have presented them with a large advantage. The use of *campos pagados* that were formatted like regular news articles was also a likely means of effective propaganda, as readers might have taken them and their message as mainstream news. The use by the authorities of quotations by Salvadoran citizens opposing the

movement also may have been effective in negatively influencing popular opinion about the strikers.

The counter movement statements that came from authorities' use of *campos pagados* demonstrate the existence of debate between the counter movement and movement claims during the strike. Both movement and authorities were highly critical of each other, and were able to voice their criticisms and opinions in their own words through this forum. The obvious advantage of the authorities in terms of resources meant that counter movement was able to create paid announcements that resembled regular news articles or that took up, at times, two pages. This created an obstacle for the strikers, whose limited resources meant that their announcements were smaller and of a less professional format. Nonetheless, the movement announcements, and those in support of the movement, outnumbered those of the authorities and certainly allowed the movement a forum through which to express their demands, intentions and make statements to the public.

The Social Movement Message in the Mainstream Press

The extent to which the position of the strikers was represented in the mainstream press is also an important indicator of their success in raising awareness and generating debate. The strike received a great deal of coverage in *La Prensa Grafica* during the nine-month period. However, the type of coverage it received frequently reflected the nature, as discussed in Chapter 4, of the mainstream media in El Salvador and there is often a significant difference between the information found in the *campos pagados* and the ways in which the strikers' demands are presented in the standard articles. For example, although the strike began in September 2002 and received almost daily coverage, the first

article to contain a quote by any of the strikers did not appear until October 9th (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 9th, 2002: 5). Coverage of the strikers' response to government actions did not make a significant appearance until October 13th, when *La Prensa* printed their response to Flores' statement that he did not plan to privatize healthcare (*La Prensa Grafica Online*, October 13th, 2002). While the recognition by the press of the element of debate surrounding the strike is reflected through its coverage of a government statement and the strikers' response, this does not occur until nearly a month after the strike had begun.

One significant characteristic of the coverage of the strike is that it tends to focus on labour issues rather than the issue of privatization and health reform. This makes the strikers appear self-interested and at times greedy. For example, in an article printed on December 23rd, 2002 two of the government- appointed negotiators (Archbishop Fernando Sáenz LaCalle and Hector Silva) are quoted as claiming that the strike has lost its concern with healthcare and anti-privatization in favour of labour demands (*La Prensa Grafica*, December 23rd, 2002: 12). Another characteristic is the frequent accompaniment of the word "privatization" with the word "supposed", making the concept appear questionable and a possible product of the overreaction of the strikers. The paper also tended to print articles regarding the pain and suffering caused by the strike to patients (especially children and the elderly) who had lost appointments due to the work stoppages. For example, on October 10th, 2002 an article entitled "One Appointment and Four Months Lost" focussed on a child who has missed an appointment with a specialist after waiting for four months. This article makes the strikers look very immoral (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 9th, 2002: 8). A similar article on October 23rd tells

the story of an elderly woman who travelled to the capital for an appointment that was cancelled due to the strike. The woman has only two oranges with her to eat, making the strikers appear in a negative light (*La Prensa Grafica*, October 23rd, 2002: 10).

The strikers' protest actions and tactics also received mixed coverage throughout the strike. While some actions, such as the first White March, received a great deal of attention, others were largely ignored. The hunger strike by six doctors that occurred toward the end of the strike, for example, was not mentioned in *La Prensa* until eight days after it had begun. The coverage it was given, in addition, was simply a mention in passing that six doctors had been on hunger strike since April 1st, and the coverage was not in a prominent section of the paper (*La Prensa Grafica*, April 8th, 2003: 30).

Despite the often-negative depiction of the strikers, and the focus on their cause as being labour related rather than against privatization, the movement did manage to receive some coverage in the paper that reflected their goals and generated debate. On October 8th an article entitled "Deputies Take Lessons in Politics" covers the debate in the Legislative Assembly over the strike. It states that, after almost five hours of debate, which included the presence of members of the Commission on Health and the Human Rights Ombudswoman, there was little agreement regarding the crisis or the process of reform (*La Prensa Grafica Online*: October 8th, 2002). Despite the inability among the deputies to reach an agreement, this article demonstrates the generation, by the strikers, of debate within the political arena. It contains quotes by the Human Rights Ombudswoman, and by members of the ARENA, PCN and FMLN parties. It also demonstrates the ability of the movement to generate coverage of this contentious issue within the mainstream press.

Additionally, on October 10th an article contains statements from Guillermo Mata, Ricardo Alfaro and Ricardo Monge regarding the privatization of healthcare. They defend Decree 1024, claiming that they believe that privatization has already begun and that it will be harmful to the majority of the Salvadoran people. Mata defends the legality of the strike, stating that it is legal because “it is guaranteeing access to health for Salvadorans” This demonstrates the promotion of both awareness and debate in the public realm, as the arguments of representatives of SIMETRISSS, the Medical College and STISSS are present in the article. It also demonstrates the ability of the movement to introduce issues into the political arena. Both through the strike itself and the introduction of Decree 1024, the strikers have created a significant political debate surrounding the issue of privatization that focuses on bringing its opposition into law.

The response by the strikers to the government’s proposals and statements also received some coverage. As mentioned above, on October 13th an article gave the response of the Tripartite Commission to Flores’ speech of the October 11th, in which he claimed his intention for reform without privatization. The strikers are quoted calling Flores’ speech “superficial and not serious”. Guillermo Mata states that the strikers’ response would be to enhance their actions and Ricardo Alfaro calls Flores a liar, stating that he had lied about all previous privatizations. This demonstrated coverage by the paper of both sides of the debate. (*La Prensa Grafica Online*, October 13th, 2002).

On December 15th, 2002 an article reports on SIMETRISSS’s plan to march in opposition to ISSS’s Plan of 100 Days. It contains a quote by Isaías Cordero del Sid that states that the plan will put off a solution to the strike and avoids looking for a serious solution to the healthcare crisis. He states that SIMETRISSS is counting on the support of

NGOs and international organizations, and that the strike will continue until all fired workers are rehired, lost salaries are recovered and the government assures it will not privatize healthcare. This shows that the reactions of the unions towards government plans were able to reach the mainstream media. It also allows the union to publicly state its intentions and motivations regarding the strike and strike tactics. Through its coverage of the intended protest actions of the strikers, the paper was inadvertently helping to publicize the protest, possibly helping the strikers to gain public support. (*La Prensa Grafica Online*, December 15th, 2002).

On January 14th, 2003, *La Prensa Grafica* reported on the intention of the strikers to take legal action against Social Security authorities. The strikers accuse ISSS of being corrupt, and state that they will file at least eighteen charges, including those of human rights abuses and of mismanagement of funds (*La Prensa Grafica*, January 14th, 2003: 24). This article allows for the point of view of the strikers to be publicly expressed, and also contains some criticism of the authorities.

The strikers also received some coverage in the main section of *La Prensa* around the time of the negotiations between the government and strikers. For example, in a May 4th article, Guillermo Mata responds to statements by Flores regarding the illegality of the strike and his assertion that many of the striking doctors are justifiably fired. Mata states that the president was lying about the illegality of the strike and argues that the labour code requires that each worker be informed of their dismissal in writing. He claims that ISSS simply pinned a list of names to the wall of a hospital and therefore the doctors were not legally dismissed. The article is accompanied by a statement of intention by the strikers and Margarita Posada, the head of the Citizen's Alliance against Healthcare

Privatization, to increase protest action and to increase ties with deputies from the CDC and PDC parties. On the same page, an insert contains interviews with patients that support the strikers, their cause and their being rehired with pay (*La Prensa Grafica*, May 4th, 2003: 10). This demonstrates a space, in the mainstream news, for the opinions of the strikers. It also demonstrates a rare allowance of a show of civic support for the strikers through interviews with patients.

The paid advertisements and regular news stories are an important means through which to evaluate the ways in which the movement against healthcare privatization was able to raise awareness and debate among the Salvadoran population, between the movement and the authorities, and in the political arena. It is also important, however, to discuss the limitations of the media in this capacity and to discuss the other means by which the movement attempted to generate awareness. The interviews conducted with Elizabeth Torres, press secretary for STISSS and Manuel Menjivar, the public relations officer of SIMETRISSS give a great deal of insight regarding the unions' perceptions of the importance of press coverage for the movement, of the obstacles faced in gaining access to the mainstream press, and the best ways through which to raise awareness and debate.

Both Torres and Menjivar, when asked of the importance of the mainstream media for social movements, spoke of the great obstacles involved in finding access to the press, resulting from the nature of the media in El Salvador. When asked about the role of the press in the work of social movements, both indicate that, while there are some openings through which the movements can reach the general public by means of the mainstream press, the press connections with the government create obstacles. Torres

states that: “The press is the channel through which social movements can communicate with the rest of the public.” She also indicates that, because the unions lack the resources to fund their own press campaigns, access to mainstream media sources are necessary in order to “...communicate with the public about the different activities that the union is doing and to create methods that attract journalists so that they have the information to communicate, like about a street activity or march...” She states, however, that: “...the editorial line is against the social position of the left...against organized struggle. Then when people buy [the papers], what is the problem? Those that are telling the stories manipulate them.” (Elizabeth Torres, Personal Communication, August 18th, 2004).

Similarly, when asked of the importance of the media for the movement, Menjivar states:

The thing about the media is that they openly support the government so logically they are against social movements, but there are very small instances when there is an opening for movements, that gives them coverage and an opportunity to communicate. But in general big press in this country is pro-government press so it's press for people that belong to the governing party and logically think along the same lines as the governing party. So, they try to minimize or to create a negative image of social movements. (Manuel Menjivar, Personal Communication, August 12th, 2004).

Therefore, it can be seen that, while both Torres and Menjivar believe access to the press is important for movements, that they recognize the obstacles posed by the nature of the media in El Salvador. In fact, they both indicate that raising public awareness is crucial for the movement, but indicate other means of doing so. Torres, for example, states that during the strike the unions would pay for access to the mainstream media (*campos pagados* or paid radio spots) or rely on the internet as a means of alternative communication (Elizabeth Torres, Personal Communication, August 18th, 2004).

Similarly, Menjivar states: “We have to pay for space in the media and some others are more open and give better coverage and in general what social movements want is alternative communication” (Manuel Menjivar, Personal Communication, August 12th, 2004).

In order to understand the goals of the movement for raising awareness, I asked Torres and Menjivar about the audience they were most concerned with targeting through the media. Torres indicates that it is most important to target the working class, from all different sectors. She states, however, that targeting this population with mainstream press is very difficult. She states: “The problem is that with the limits to the methods of communication it’s very hard for a person that spends twelve hours a day working to understand what is happening... to reach a person that is uneducated, if you spend the whole day working you don’t read the newspaper”. She further states, however: “... but we have to reach the working population, because they will all be affected by the privatization of security and the privatization of health because they’re the ones that have to pay.” (Elizabeth Torres, Personal Communication, August 18th, 2004).

When asked if she believed that the movement was successful in reaching its projected audience, Torres states:

I think that yes, because we obtained a return in social support- like we had a radio that made a continuous transmission during all the White Marches, everyday during the strike it was explaining what was happening. It wasn’t anything economic, we wanted to tell what was happening with the strike, we weren’t selling a product, we wanted to send out a message so that it wouldn’t be manipulated. However, the public had to understand, so we used simple language like “O Pago o se muere [Either Pay or Die]”- short phrases that the people can come to understand, right? They understand that they can’t buy medicine that costs \$20.00 for example. So I think that against privatization, to reach the general population, you have to use things that the population will understand. So to reach people...you also have to talk with people so that they don’t allow it, the

privatization of health, because the media doesn't allow you to reach all the people. And the same media does not support the movement... In our country, the media is not objective, but what happens [is that people believe what they hear in the media], so that which reaches the population is generally manipulated. (Elizabeth Torres, Personal Communication, August 18th, 2004)

When I asked the same questions, Menjivar indicated that the target audience was the patients that use the ISSS system and the population in general. However, when I asked if he thinks the movement was able to reach its projected audience, he stated that he thinks that, although the movement found some opportunities within the mainstream press, the pro-government nature of the media was an obstacle to the movement. He feels that the media either ignore or manipulate stories that challenge the party line, and therefore the media does not serve to effectively raise awareness for the movement.

When I asked about the ability of the movement to bring issues into the political agenda, Torres and Menjivar agreed that the media was not the most important means through which to raise issues. Torres states:

The best way to reach people during conflicts like the one in the health system is with labour based actions... So when there are lots of people in the street, insisting on receiving quality services and the doctors as well are there with the people- this mobilization does more than the media. Then the media and the journalists begin to ask the members of the Assembly what is happening, what is happening, is it real or not... This mobilization of the Salvadoran population, seen by the government, makes public the proposal to the Legislative Assembly, the proposal for reform of the health system- so it's easy for this proposal to reach the Assembly, for example." (Elizabeth Torres, Personal Communication, August 18th, 2004)

Menjivar similarly believes that the message of the movement as relayed by the media has little impact on politicians. He believes that they already have their own opinions, and that the actions of the movement have more impact than the media coverage. Therefore, while both believe that media access is important to the movement, they recognize that it

is often more useful to generate public support by engaging in public activities. Torres' statement seems to reflect a belief that actions such as marches and demonstrations, when supported by the public, will in turn generate media interest which may then generate political interest and possible change. She seems to think there is the potential for a chain reaction of movement impact that is sparked by the actual public actions in which the movement engages.

It is evident that both Torres of STISSS and Menjivar of SIMETRISSS were concerned, during the strike, with increasing public awareness and generating debate. It is also clear, however, that there are many limitations to doing this due to the nature of the media in El Salvador. As the analysis of the paid advertisements and the regular articles indicate, the movement was somewhat successful in using the media to generate awareness and debate. They also, importantly, used public tactics such as information sessions, protests and marches to raise awareness among the population. This public demonstration of action against privatization, according to Torres and Menjivar, was crucial in reaching the population in general and in bringing the issue into the realm of political debate. The statements of Torres regarding audience also display a concern with reaching a broad population- the majority of Salvadoran people and those most affected by the potential privatization of the health system. Therefore, the movement against healthcare privatization, despite the obstacles caused by the mainstream media, was certainly able to generate debate and awareness surrounding the issue of privatization.

Of the three dimensions of democracy, the generation of debate and public awareness is the most obviously successful. Despite obstacles faced due to the nature of the mainstream and press and due to its limited resources, the movement was able to raise

awareness and debate surrounding the issue of healthcare privatization. Sandoval indicates that movements can contribute to democracy by raising issues of contention that are not raised by power holders or authorities. The movement was certainly successful in doing this. Additionally, despite restrictions, the movement was able to open spaces in the media for this debate, making it public and making it a public and political priority. The third dimension of democracy, the generation of public awareness and debate, therefore, can be seen to be the most successful of the three in terms of social movements making a contribution to democracy.

The concept of movement success, particularly in terms of contributing to democracy, is complicated and involves a long process of pressure and of numerous types of actions. As was previously discussed, a social movement is able to make a democratic contribution, but may not necessarily be successful in terms of lasting change in practice or in terms of achieving a shift in structures that perpetuate failures of democracy. This is largely the case of the Salvadorean movement against healthcare privatization- while the movement certainly demonstrated an ability to promote the three democratic dimensions, and were at times successful in achieving change in the short term, their success in making long term democratic change was met by many barriers and will require much more time. In the following chapter I will further elaborate on the findings of this analysis and will discuss the implications of this case study in terms of further research on social movements and democratization.

Chapter 6: The Salvadoran Healthcare Workers' Strike against Social Security Healthcare Privatization and Its Impact on Democratic Quality- Discussion

In this thesis, I have explored the ability of social movements to contribute to democratization in a country with limited democracy through a study of the strike movement in El Salvador against the privatization of healthcare. This case study was chosen as an example of a movement which challenged neo-liberal policies that, as argued in chapters three and four, were not based on democratic principles. They were also chosen as an example of a movement that occurred in the context of a country that, while it has made a formal transition to liberal democracy, can be seen to be unsuccessful in terms of meeting certain important democratic requirements. The Salvadoran case, therefore, was a logical case for the exploration of a movement's ability to influence democratic quality within a new democracy.

Through the research, I sought to better understand whether the strike movement in El Salvador promoted a stronger form of democracy in that country. This was carried out in an attempt to understand to what extent, in countries such as El Salvador, movements can make an impact to the degree that they can contribute to changes in the structures hinder democracy. As was previously discussed, policies such as the privatization of healthcare are generally not decided by voting, may be developed with little or no popular feedback or consultation, and may be implemented by governments and international organizations with very little transparency or room for opposition. These policies, therefore, reflect structures of power which may act as a barrier to the eradication of poverty and its by-products and may in fact deepen the conditions of

immiseration which are common in much of the world. With this research I hope to make a contribution to the growing discussion by social movement scholars on the democratic potential of movements in existing democracies, on the ability of social movements to make lasting, structural change in terms of global power structures, and the need for development that makes a lasting impact towards the eradication of poverty and exclusion.

I have explored the connection between social movements and democratization by drawing on the example of the Salvadoran social movement against the privatization of the Social Security healthcare system. Based on the existing literature on social movements and on democracy, I have used three dimensions of democracy in my analysis: popular participation, socio-economic equity and public awareness and debate. The literature, as outlined in Chapter Three, reflects an interest in the analysis of how social movement outcomes can go beyond short term policy change to create longer lasting structural changes and helped to draw out the three dimensions of democracy used for the analysis. The Salvadoran movement, through its challenge to the neo-liberal policy of health care privatization was challenging a major power structure- it therefore had the potential to create more than policy change. It had an impact on a structure that perpetuates exclusion and marginalisation through the commoditization of health care. While the possibility for democratic impact through structural change existed in the Salvadoran case, the movement faced limits to reaching this achievement, which were outlined in the previous chapter and will be further summarized below.

In addition to the literature on social movements, literature on democracy was also outlined in Chapter Three and was drawn upon to inform this study. The extensive literature on democracy reflects the many dimensions of the term. Many scholars recognize the need to expand upon the notion of procedural democracy to achieve greater gains in terms of participation, equity and free public debate of crucial political and social issues. Additionally, scholars such as Leftwich (1993), argue that neo-liberal policies such as privatization are undemocratic. This helped to establish the validity of exploring social movement ability to expand the current nature of democracy in many countries, as well as allowing the correlation to be drawn between the opposition to privatization policies and democracy. Many scholars draw attention to the need to invest more in the study of social movements and their potential to democratize. The aim of this work is to add to this field.

The analysis of the case study of the Salvadoran movement against health care privatization, as discussed in the previous chapter, explored democratic contribution as a social movement outcome. While this research can certainly contribute to the existing literature on social movements and democratization, it must be recognized that the process is long and challenging. It is for this reason that the analysis focused on the impact of the movement, within the time-frame of the 2002-2003 strike, to contribute to a *process* of democratization and structural change. The analysis tries to answer whether or not the movement can be seen as successful in terms of making a contribution to this process and can contribute to a growing dialogue in the literature on social movement potential and outcomes, making a contribution the understanding of if and how social movements make an impact that reflects the growing refusal to accept the levels of

poverty and exclusion in countries and systems that claim to be democratic or to be based on democratic principles. This research can also provide a discussion of the barriers that exist to the realization of this potential, the barriers that exist to the ability of a movement, in this case the Salvadoran movement, to make an impact on democracy.

The first dimension of democracy analyzed in the previous chapter was participation. Within this dimension, two elements were discussed. The first was diverse civic participation in protest activities, or civic engagement. The analysis, detailed in Chapter Five, led to the conclusion that the movement was able to achieve the generation of civic engagement and participation against the health care privatization process. They were able to raise enormous support from the citizenry in the streets and throughout the strike period. While this was achieved during the nine-months, the continued repression by the government of El Salvador and the national police demonstrates that there is a great deal more work to be done in terms of changing power structures that repress protest by the citizenry. Therefore, the movement was able to generate active civic participation, an important element of a democracy, but did so within a broader context of a government, which through repeated acts of repression, showed there in much that remains to be changed in order to fulfill the requirements of democracy. The movement certainly demonstrated their ability to make an impact in this dimension of democracy, but their longer-term ability was limited by the repressive nature of the government and its bodies.

The second element of participation that was analyzed was the participation by citizens in the policy process. This is an important element, as one of the major undemocratic qualities of the move to privatize healthcare in El Salvador was the failure

by the government to involve the citizenry in the process of health reform. In this area, the movement was successful in promoting the ideal of public participation through its use of *campos pagados*, its activities aimed at creating inclusive, participatory discussions of health reform, its promotion of transparency regarding their actions and intentions throughout the strike etc. However, in terms of actually changing the reform process in El Salvador, their impact is much less definite. The strike ended in the formation of the Monitoring Commission on Health Reform, meant to include members of civil society and representatives of healthcare users, in addition to government, business, doctors and workers, in discussions of reform. Since its formation as part of the agreements to end the strike, however, the Commission has yet to do anything significant and appears to be a token of the government's attempt to appease the strikers. The analysis of the movement's impact therefore demonstrates that while the movement's actions certainly reflected a commitment to increasing civic participation in the health care policy process, it was unable to make significant impact in terms of breaking down the barriers placed by the government towards meaningful civic consultation in the policy process.

The second dimension of democracy analyzed in the previous chapter was socio-economic equity. In this area the movement did achieve certain concrete successes: they were able to halt President Flores' initial proposal for reform with privatization and they achieved the initial ratification of Decree 1024. The *brigadas medicas* were also a means by which the striking doctors successfully put into practice the values of equitable healthcare access that they were promoting throughout the strike. These accomplishments were significant given the nature of the government and the opposition faced by the

movement from the Legislative Assembly, particularly deputies from the governing ARENA party. The movement, it can be argued, achieved success within the scope of the nine month strike. The strike ended with a promise by Flores not to privatize the social security health system. This success was of great importance and was very significant. It seems, despite these successes, as though the movement, and the vulnerable people of El Salvador whose access to health is either already precarious or whose existing access is threatened, continue to face too many barriers to claim lasting, structural success. The conditions of poverty and the continuing pressure to privatize, likely to be exacerbated by the recently signed Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) prove that the process of achieving socio-economic equity, even within the realm of the healthcare sector, will be a long and very difficult process. The social movement against healthcare privatization in El Salvador was able to promote the values of socio- economic equity, but was unable in its scope to make significant changes due to the national and international barriers that contribute to structures of poverty and limit access.

The third democratic dimension used for the analysis was public awareness and debate. This is the most successful of the three dimensions, despite the many obstacles faced by the nature of the media in El Salvador. Despite definite obstacles, the movement was able to find space within the mainstream press, and was able to generate a debate on the issue of privatization that existed strongly in the public realm. Perhaps this was the case because the media is the least institutionalized of the potential barriers to social movement success in El Salvador. While the media generally promote the party line, as discussed in Chapter Four, the public realm is much more fluid than the structures that limit democracy in terms of participation and socio-economic equity. This is an area

which could be further explored to improve understanding of the various potential barriers to movement success.

The analysis of the ability of social movements to contribute to democracy, summarized briefly above, can lead to a number of conclusions. Such a study is limited due to the nature of change and the nature of social movements. Structural change and democratization are very long and difficult processes. While the analysis of a nine-month movement can contribute to the literature on social movement impacts on democratization by adding to the understanding of the potential for success, the barriers faced by movements in this context, and the different dimensions of democracy and change, it is certainly clear that longer studies are necessary to fully understand and draw conclusions about social movement impacts.

The difficulty in making concrete conclusions regarding the ability of movements to make impact democracy brings up important issues of the nature of change. The conclusion regarding the social movement in El Salvador, in terms of making structural and democratic changes is that they certainly contributed to the promotion of each dimension of democracy in the short-term. They made a contribution to a larger process that may eventually result in structural changes and democracy. They promoted values of participation, socio-economic equity and public awareness and debate. They made impacts on a smaller, shorter term scale and may act as precedents in a larger democratic struggle. While it is not viable to speculate regarding future changes, the potential of movements to make impacts can surely be seen through this analysis. While structural changes were not achieved in this context, the analysis calls attention to the contribution of the movement in this regard and therefore to its ability. It also calls attention to the

continued existence of undemocratic conditions in El Salvador that contribute to the limited ability of the movement to make a long term impact.

It can perhaps be argued therefore, that change is multi-dimensional and can be examined as a continuum. The case study shows that movements are certainly able to make democratic contributions, but that within the time frame of the strike it was difficult to make structural change. The barriers existing in the Salvadoran context, and also in a more global capacity, mean that structural change is something that could possibly only occur as the result of a much bigger movement, or network of movements. The Salvadoran movement, it can be argued, was able to make change, however the changes impacted only certain dimensions of the issue.

This study hopes to contribute to the existing literature on social movements and strengthened democracy. In the literature on social movement impacts and structural change, there is a shortage of studies on impacts on democracy in existing democracies. As discussed in Chapter Three, there is a great deal of literature on the impact of social movements in transitions from autocracy to democracy, but a gap in the analysis of new, liberal democracies. This seems very relevant in the current global context of new democracies, and the link between neo-liberal economics and the promotion of democracy.

There also seems to be a gap in the discussion of social movement opposition to power structures that are larger than the national level. This also seems very relevant in the global context where greater power structures work with, or put pressure on, governments to influence policies which are largely beyond the reach of public consultation and democratic process. It would be informative and helpful for research to

reflect the implications of globalized systems for democracy at a national level, particularly in developing countries such as El Salvador.

This study is not without limitations. As previously mentioned, the limited time-frame has made it difficult to form conclusions regarding actual concrete impacts of social movements on democracy. Longitudinal, and perhaps cross-contextual studies, such as those that examining the impact of social movements in various new democracies facing privatizations or similar policies over time, are needed to fully understand this issue. This study contributes to a body of literature which, while informative in terms of new issues raised and the introduction of new dimensions of social movement theory, frequently concludes with similar recommendations for longer, broader study.

Another limitation of this research is the qualitative nature of it. While it is based on a question of democratic *quality*, and inherently takes into account democratization and change as a process, a larger and more in-depth study could certainly make greater achievements by combining important qualitative data with quantitative information regarding social movements over time and their longer term and perhaps more concrete impacts. This study takes a snapshot of a particular movement opposition to a very large issue within a nine-month period. It would be informative and important to follow the course of the movement and of the ongoing threat of privatization as a means of really understanding the movement's potential within this process.

The limits to examining the cause- effect nature of the strike and its outcomes means that the concept of social movements as making a contribution, as opposed to direct and quantitative success is important. The Salvadoran movement against health care privatization can be seen to have made a contribution to a much larger process of

democracy. It halted, as a direct result of the strike, the privatization of health care in a country in which access to health care is already precarious for millions of people who are excluded for socio-economic reasons. The context in which this strike took place- of poverty, neo-liberal political influence at a national and an international level, and a government that was closed to civic participation in decision-making and reform, means that this nine-month strike will likely be part of a much larger continuum of protest that may eventually lead El Salvador to more meaningful democracy.

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