Imagining a Post-Development Era?
Critical Thought, Development and Social Movements

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Introduction:
The Demise of Development and the Problematization of Protest

For some time now, it has been difficult — at times even impossible — to talk about development, protest or revolution with the same confidence and encompassing scope with which intellectuals and activists spoke about these vital matters in our most recent past. It is as if the elegant discourses of the 1960s — the high decade of both Development and Revolution — had been suspended, caught in mid air as they strove toward their zenith, and, like fragile bubbles, exploded, leaving a scrambled trace of their glorious path behind. Hesitantly perhaps, but with a persistance that has to be taken seriously, a new discourse has set in. Where one spoke of Development — or its flip side, Revolution — one is now allowed to speak a very different language: that of the "crisis" of development, on the one hand, and "new social actors" and "new social movements," on the other. In fact, many scholars seem to be proposing a radical reinterpretation of social and political reality based on a new set of categories such as "alternative development," new identities, radical pluralism, historicity and hegemony.

In the previous period, from the early post-War years to the end of the 1970s, the relation between truth and reality that characterized political discourse was relatively clear and direct. Development was chiefly a matter of capital, technology, and education and the appropriate policy and planning mechanisms to successfully combine these elements. Resistance, on the other hand, was primarily a class issue and a question of imperialism. Nowadays, this transparency has been muddled, and even imperialism and class are thought to be the object of innumerable mediations. But while research and inquiry into the nature of resistance and political practice have been quite alive and growing, the same is not true for the area of development. A new problematization of the nature of popular resistance and mobilization, and of intellectuals' understanding of them, has resulted in new ways of thinking these issues, especially in relation to social movements. The theory of social movements has become, particularly in Western Europe and Latin America, but also increasingly in other parts of the Third World, one of the key arenas for social

science and critical thought (Calderón, Piscitelli and Reyna 1992), and studies of social movements have proliferated during the past ten years.[1]

The same vitality does not characterize the second key arena with which this paper is concerned, that of "development." While many actors consider development dead, and that it has failed miserably, few viable alternative conceptualizations and designs for social change are offered in its place. And yet, despite the recognition of its demise, the imaginary of development — still without viable alternatives although somewhat weakened by the recent crisis — continues to hold sway. If at the level of social movement theory new social orders are clearly imaginable, in the arena of development — which to a great extent determines the economic and political practices necessary to bring about new orders — the picture is blurred, adumbrating a future society where only "basic needs" are met, that is, a "developed" or quasi-developed society. But to arrive at this society (assuming that it were possible) would entail that all the fuss about plurality, difference and autonomy — notions central to social movement discourse, as is argued below — would have been in vain.

This crisis in developmentalist discourse can be seen in at least two ways: on the one hand, the inability of critical thought and most social forces to imagine a new domain which finally leaves behind the imaginary of development, and which transcends development's dependence on Western modernity and historicity; and, on the other, the emergence of a powerful social movement discourse which, although still unclear about its possible directions, has quickly become a privileged arena for intellectual inquiry and political action. The first aspect of this crisis elicits such questions as: Why has the imaginary of development proven so resistant to radical critique? What kinds of critical thought and social practice might lead to thinking about Third World reality differently? Can the hegemonic epistemological space of development — inscribed in multiple forms of knowledge, political technologies and social relations — be significantly modified? The second leads one to ask: How do popular actions become objects of knowledge in social movement discourse? If new discourses and practices are appearing that contribute to shaping the reality to which they refer (Foucault 1985), what is the domain that this discourse makes visible? Who can "know," according to what rules, and what are the pertinent objects? What criteria of politics does it put into effect, with what consequences for popular actors? Finally, what is the relationship between the demise of development and the emergence of social movements?

The aim of this essay is to bridge these two insights by putting in question the presuppositions of the systems of inquiry that circumbscribe the two domains. The argument can be summarized in three propositions:

1. Most critiques of development, articulated within the epistemological and cultural space it defines, have reached an impasse. Thus, the

present crisis does not call for a "better" way of doing development, not even for "another development." A critique of the discourse and practice of development, however, can help clear the ground for a more radical collective imagining of alternative futures.

2. Development, according to this critique, has to be seen as an invention and strategy produced by the "First World" about the "underdevelopment" of the "Third World," and not only as an instrument of economic control over the physical and social reality of much of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Development has been the primary mechanism through which these parts of the world have been produced and have produced themselves, thus marginalizing or precluding other ways of seeing and doing. The problem is complicated by the fact that the post-World War II discourse of development is firmly entrenched in Western modernity and economy.

3. To think about "alternatives to development" thus requires a theoretico-practical transformation of the notions of development, modernity and the economy. This transformation can be best achieved by building upon the practices of social movements, especially those in the Third World that have emerged in response to post-World War II hegemonic social orders. These movements are essential for the creation of alternative visions of democracy, economy and society.

The task of critical thought is "to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (Foucault 1985: 9).[2] Consequently, the product of critical thought should be a history of our present, of those discourses and practices that have made us what we are, shaped what we think, determined what we see and feel, a history, in short, which clears the way so we may help bring into being, through our reflection, those things that have never been thought or imagined. As Haraway (1988: 580) puts it, "we need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life." This is not something that the intellectual is in a position to define by him or herself, but something that has to be invented and practiced collectively, by social movements, for example. In what follows I give, first, an account of how the Third World "has been made," and then go on to discuss social movement theory.

The Hegemony of Development

The question of the making of the Third World through development discourses and practices has to be seen in relation to the larger history of Western modernity, of which development seems to be one of the last and most insidious chapters. Development is most clearly anchored in the Western economy, with its ensemble of systems of production, power and

signification (Polanyi 1957; Braudel 1977; Dumont 1977; Foucault 1973; Baudrillard 1975). Indeed, development provides a particularly privileged space for exploring the interconnection of practices and symbols of reason, the economy, representation, society and modernity. Modernity can be understood as that period in European history inaugurated at the end of the eighteenth century, when "Man" (sic) turned the apparatuses of knowledge upon himself in a distancing, self-objectifying fashion, thus originating the forms of inquiry and rationality that charaterize today's sciences (Foucault 1970). Politically, "the fundamental characteristic of modernity is the advent of the democratic revolution" (Mouffe 1988: 33). This characterization of the modern practices of Reason, rationality and even democracy, although already naturalized through the universalization of European history, implies an anthropological critique: as a peculiar, historically locatable set of practices (Rabinow 1986, 1988). A critical study of development would thus situate itself within this anthropology of reason and modernity, showing the constructed and even exotic character of many of our most "rational" practices.

Modernity has also been understood as the attempt to provide a foundation for the social, one that is grounded in reason and a project of global emancipation. One cannot look at the bright side of modernity, however, without looking at its dark side of domination. "The 'Enlightment', which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines" (Foucault 1979: 222). Consequently, modernity's inventions must be seen for what they are: Janus-faced relations between forms of knowledge made possible by reason and the systems of power created in the process of building a rational society, including the processes of "emancipation" (Nandy 1989).[3] From this critical perspective, development can be described as an apparatus (*dispositif*) that links forms of knowledge about the Third World with the deployment of forms of power and intervention, resulting in the mapping and production of Third World societies. In other words, development is what constructs the contemporary Third World, silently, without our noticing it. By means of this discourse, individuals, governments and communities are seen as "underdeveloped" (or placed under conditions in which they tend to see themselves as such), and are treated accordingly. "It took twenty years for two billion people to define themselves as underdeveloped" — Ivan Illich is quoted as saying (Trinh 1982, 1985). Problematic as this statement might be (who are the "they" who define themselves as such?), it captures the tenor of this hegemonic discourse.

Needless to say, the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America did not always see themselves in terms of "development." The history of development is relatively recent; it goes back only as far as the early post-World War II period, when the apparatuses of knowledge production and intervention (the World Bank, the United Nations, bilateral development

agencies, planning offices in the Third World, etc.) were established and when a whole new political economy of truth — different from that of the colonial or pre-war period — was set into place. The history and political economy of this process are too complex to recount here; this has been done elsewhere (Sachs, ed. 1992; Escobar 1984, 1988). To examine development as discourse requires understanding why so many countries started to see themselves as underdeveloped, that is, how "to develop" became for them a fundamental problem, and how, finally, it was made real through the deployment of myriad strategies and programs. Development as discourse shares structural features with other colonizing discourses, such as Orientalism, which Said argues

> can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient — dealing with it by making statements about it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient ... My contention is that without examining orientalism as a discourse we cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage — and even produce — the Orient politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightment period. [1979:3].

Likewise, development has functioned as an all-powerful mechanism for the production and management of the Third World in the post-World War II period. A complete reorganization of knowledge production systems, for example, took place in Latin America after 1950 (Fuenzalida 1983, 1987; Escobar 1989). The previous model, organized in the nineteenth century around the European classical professions and centered on education and training, was replaced by a new one patterned after North American institutions and styles. This transformation took place to suit the demands of the new development order, which relied heavily on research and knowledge that could provide a reliable picture of a country's social and economic problems. Everything that was deemed important became the object of knowledge; this was achieved through the proliferation of development disciplines and sub-disciplines (development economics, agricultural sciences, health, nutrition and educational sciences, demography, city and regional planning, etc). Once Third World countries became the target of new mechanisms of power — embodied in endless programs and "strategies" — their economies, societies and cultures were offered up as new objects of knowledge that, in turn, created new possibilites of power.

It was the creation of a vast institutional network (from international organizations and universities to local development agencies) that insured the efficient functioning of this apparatus. Once consolidated, this system determined what could be said, thought, imagined; in short, it defined a perceptual domain, the space of development. Industrialization, family

planning, the "Green Revolution," macroeconomic policy, "integrated rural development" and the like, all exist within the same space, all repeat the same basic truth, namely, that development is about paving the way for the achievement of those conditions that characterize rich societies: industrialization, agricultural modernization, and urbanization. Until recently, it seemed impossible to get away from this imaginary of development. Everywhere one looked, what one found was the busy, repetitive reality of development: governments designing ambitious development plans, institutions carrying out development programs in cities and countryside alike, experts studying development problems and producing theories *ad nauseam*, foreign experts all over the place, multinational corporations brought into the country in the name of development. In sum, development colonized reality, became reality, and no matter how sharp an instrument we used to pierce it, to break through it, we seemed to be left embarrassingly empty handed.

This critique of development as discourse has begun to coalesce in recent years (Mueller 1987, 1991; Ferguson 1990; Apffel Marglin and Marglin, eds. 1991; Sachs, ed. 1992). As in V.Y. Mudimbe's study of Africanism (1988), the aim of these critiques is to examine the foundations of an order of knowledge about the Third World, the ways in which the Third World is constituted in and through representation. Third World reality is inscribed with precision and persistence by the discourses and practices of economists, planners, nutritionists, demographers, and the like, making it difficult for people to define their own interests in their own terms — in many cases actually disabling them to do so (Illich 1977). Development proceeded by creating abnormalities ("the poor," "the malnourished," "the illiterate," "pregnant women," "the landless") which it would then treat or reform. Seeking to eradicate all problems, it actually ended up multiplying them to infinity. Embodied in a multiplicity of practices, institutions and structures, it has had a profound effect on the Third World: social relations, ways of thinking, visions of the future are all indelibly marked and shaped by this ubiquitous operator.

This view of development as discourse is certainly different from analyses carried out from the perspective of political economy, modernization, or even "alternative development." Such analyses have generated proposals to modify the current regime of development: ways to improve upon this or that aspect, revised theories or conceptualizations, even its redeployment within a new rationality (for instance, socialist, anti-imperialist, or ecological). These modifications, however, do not constitute a radical positioning in relation to the discourse; they are instead a reflection of how difficult it is to imagine a truly different domain. Critical thought should help recognize the pervasive character and functioning of development as a paradigm of self-definition. But can it go further and contribute to the transformation or dismantling of the discourse?

First one must ask whether such a domain can be imagined. Philosophers have made us aware that we cannot describe exhaustively the period in which we happen to live, since it is from within its rules that we speak and think, and since it provides the basis for our descriptions and our own history (Benjamin 1969: 253-264; Foucault 1972: 130, 131; Guha 1989: 215-223).[4] We may be aware of regions or fragments of our era, but only a certain distance from it will enable us to attempt the critical description of its totality as an era which has ceased to be ours. We may be approaching this point in relation to the post-War order of development. The critiques of development by dependency theorists, for instance, still functioned within the same discursive space of development, even if seeking to attach it to a different international and class rationality. We may now be approaching the point at which we can delimit more clearly the past era, capture it in its otherness, and make it discontinuous with its discursive practice. Are we not beginning to inhabit a gap between the discursive practice of development and a new one, which is slowly and painfully coming into existence, but which will establish us as different from the previous bankrupt order, so that we will not be obliged to speak the same truths, the same language, and prescribe the same strategies?

However, care must be taken to safeguard this new discourse from the attempt by dominant forces to salvage development — through fashionable notions such as "sustainable development," "grassroots development," "women and development," "market-friendly development,"[5] and the like — or to restructure social realities in the Third World in line with the symbolic and material requirements of a new international division of labor based on high technology (Castells 1986; López Maya, ed. 1991; Harvey 1989; Amin 1990). Critical thought can rouse social awareness — and amplify it, especially among social movements — about the power that the past, as far as development is concerned, still has in our present.[6] The archaeology of development and studies of specific development practices can help in this regard. Above all, it will help in visualizing some possible paths along which communities can move away from development into a different domain, yet unknown, in which the "natural" need to develop is finally suspended, and in which they can experiment with different ways of organizing societies and economies and of dealing with the ravages of four decades of development.

There are already some clues about how this process might be taking place. Esteva has perhaps best summarized the new mood towards a radical move away from development:

> By now, "we" are ready to present a very good case against development. In addition to our own experience, "we" can use the extensive documentation and literature produced by expert establishments around the world, including the United Nations and other international institutions. These materials, however, do not derive any coherent and pertinent conclusions from the facts they document and examine. For

years, the literature arrived at the analytical conclusion that a missing factor or tool, or the perverse, corrupt, or inefficient use of something, could explain the damage done by development to people and their environment. These "analyses" have come to a dead end. They move in a vicious circle, like a dog chasing its tail. The conclusions of some studies are the premises of others and so on. Every development "strategy" or "approach" has been tested, again and again, under widely different conditions but with the same frustrating results. When "we" talk about the archaeology of the development myth, assuming that its cycles and promises are over, "we" are just offering a different insight about known facts, in the context of our own shared experience. We are now using our own eyes and noses, not those of the experts [Esteva 1987: 136].

The number of scholars in the Third World who agree with this pre-scription is growing. Rather than searching for development alternatives, they speak about "alternatives *to* development," that is, a rejection of the entire paradigm. They see this reformulation as a historical possibility already underway in innovative grassroots movements and experiments. In their assessment, these authors share a number of features: a critical stance with respect to established scientific knowledge; an interest in local autonomy, culture and knowledge; and the defense of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements, with which some of them have worked intimately (see especially Esteva 1987; Shet 1987; Rahnema 1988a, 1988b; Shiva 1989; Nandy 1987, 1989; Fals Borda 1988; Kothari 1987; Parajuli 1991; Sachs 1992). For these authors, as the links between development — which articulates the state with profits, patriarchy, and objectifying science and technology — on the one hand, and the marginalization of people's life and knowledge, on the other, become more evident, the search for alternatives also deepens. The imaginary of development and "catching up" with the West is drained from its appeal as violent and recurring crises (economic, ecological, political) become the order of the day. Financial crisis, on the other hand, entails the withdrawal of states in the Third World from some of their development activities. In sum, these authors see new spaces opening up in the vacuum left by the colonizing mechanisms of development, either through inno-vation or the survival and resistance of popular practices.

These grassroots initiatives, although still clearly limited, are never-theless significant. They provide the means for an "alternative [to] devel-opment as political practice" (Shet 1987). Generally speaking, what matters for a strategy of change is the formation of nuclei (Deleuze 1987; Esteva 1986) or transformations around "neuralgic knots" (López Maya, ed. 1991) through which a new discursive formation may slowly be articulated.[7] For Esteva, the challenge consists in fostering changes in both discourse and institutions through "the autonomization of cultural nuclei interconnected in reticular fashion . . . in favor of a plurality of options" (Esteva 1986: 31). The challenge, he adds, is "to co-move," not

to change, develop, or create awareness; in other words, "to intensify the
processes of construction of direct democracy" (p. 33). This is not a
process that can be described in terms of "the whole of society" but rather
as something that concerns first and foremost local and regional commu-
nities, perhaps the construction of unforeseeable reticular structures
through cooperation among groups. It is not a teleological project (mov-
ing people towards a pre-determined direction) but one which recognizes
people's agency and learns how to foster and co-move with them. About
this process, Esteva observes, peasants (and, one may add, indigenous
peoples and women) have much to say.

   It may be said that what is at stake is the transformation of the political,
economic and institutional regime of truth production that has defined the
era of development. This in turn requires changes in institutions and
social relations, openness to various forms of knowledge and cultural
manifestations, new styles of participation, greater community autonomy
over the production of norms and discourses. Whether or not the forma-
tion of nuclei or nodal points around specific social relations or problems
leads to significant transformations in the prevailing regime remains to be
seen. The future cannot be predicted in this respect, nor can an explicit
strategy be proposed. However, the new linkages effected by social move-
ments may very well lead in this direction, perhaps resulting in political
economies of truth. Social movements constitute an analytical and polit-
ical terrain in which the weakening of development and the displacement
of certain categories of modernity (for example, progress and the econ-
omy), can be defined and explored. It is in terms of social movement
discourse that the immediacy of "development," and its foundational role
in the constitution of the "Third World" and the post-World War II inter-
national economic order, can be most pertinently put to test.

Social Movements and the Transformation of the Development Order

It would not serve much purpose to speculate in the abstract about a
post-development era. Moreover, if we accept that any form of critical
thought must also be a situated one (Haraway 1988; Fraser 1989), then
theoretically informed alternatives should be practice-oriented, espe-
cially from the point of view of engaging with the politicized claims and
actions of oppositional movements. In the long run, it is the work of these
movements which would largely determine the scope and character of any
possible transformation. Hence the importance of linking the proposals
for the transformation of development with the ongoing work of social
movements.

Elaborating upon Marx's definition of critique as "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age," Nancy Fraser conceptualizes the relationship between critical theory and political practice as follows:

> first, it [Marx's definition] valorizes historically specific, conjunctural struggles as the agenda setters for critical theory; second, it posits social movements as the subjects of critique; and third, it implies that it is in the crucible of political practice that critical theories meet the ultimate test of viability [1989:2].

It is the recognition of this centrality of social movements for critical inquiry that has guided recent work in this area, especially in Latin America and Western Europe. Although there is disagreement about the nature and extent of today's social movements, it is clear to most analysts that "regardless of which perspective you adopt, it is impossible not to recognize that there has begun a change in the structure of collective action. The fact is there, redefining a new space for theory and social action, the contours of which we are beginning to visualize, even if we cannot yet fully explain them" (Calderón and Reyna 1990: 19). For many it is in relation to social movements that questions about daily life, democracy, the state, political practice, and the redefition of development can be most fruitfully pursued. Writing in Argentina, Elizabeth Jelin has captured this situation in a succinct and insightful manner:

> If we study the meaning of political practices in daily life, the construction of identities and discourses, we do not do it assuming that these are determinant — or necessary — of practices at the institutional level. Neither do we assume the autonomy of democracy on the political plane in relation to people's everyday practices. The relationships between one and the other level are complex and mediated. Our intention is to point *to a field of construction of democracy* that, in the first place, is important in itself: the *social relations of daily life* (as Chilean feminists say: democracy in the home and democracy in the State).... For a model of participatory democracy, the question is how and where systems of social and cultural relations are articulated with mechanisms of power and what are the mechanisms of intermediation. *We believe that daily life and social movements are privileged spaces in which to study these processes of mediation*, since social movements are situated, at least in theory, in the intermediate space between individualized, familiar, habitual, micro-climactic daily life, on the one hand, and socio-political processes *writ* large, of the State and the solemn and higher institutions, on the other [1987: 11, emphasis added, my translation].

Jelin's argument raises many questions. How are social movement practices to be studied? According to what represention of practices? How is social science to make visible the domain of popular practices and the intersubjective meanings (backgrounds of understanding) that underlie them? How can we account for the self-interpretation of agents? What is the field of meanings in which popular actions are inscribed and how has

this field been generated by processes of domination and resistance, strategies and tactics, scientific knowledges and popular knowledges and traditions? What are the relations between cultural definitions of social life and political culture? How do collective actors build collective identities, and how do they create new cultural models?

The importance of daily life and its practices for the study of social movements is increasingly appreciated in Latin America. To problematize everyday life is to provide the conditions for a different social theory and interpretive framework. Everyday life involves a collective act of creation, a collective signification, a culture. Reflection on daily life has to be located at the intersection of micro-processes of meaning production, on the one hand, and macro-processes of domination, on the other. Inquiry into social movements from this perspective seeks to restore the centrality of popular practices, *without reducing the movements to something else*: the logic of domination or capital accumulation, the struggle of the working class or the labor of parties. Thus oriented, such an inquiry vindicates the value of the practices of the majority in producing the world in which we live; for if is true that the majority have to live within structures of domination that are not of their own making, it is also true that, in relation to those structures and strategies, they effect a veritable process of creation, by adapting, resisting, transforming or subverting those forms through manifold tactics (De Certeau 1984; Scott 1985; Fiske 1989; Willis 1990). It is out of this type of inquiry that a new understanding of social practice in the Third World may emerge.

Although the centrality of these questions was recognized early in current social movement theory in Latin America (*Nueva Sociedad* 1983; Slater 1985),[8] the examination of those that focused on the articulation of everyday life and social movements can be said to be just beginning; other aspects have been given greater importance. This peculiarity in Latin American social movement theory should, therefore, be subject to examination.

Critics have, in this regard, pointed to a lack of precision and systematicity. "Studies of social movements in Latin America are the result of a very specific intellectual and political conjuncture" — states Ruth Cardoso in the opening paragraph of her critical review of social movements literature. "There exist" — she continues — "significant differences and lack of precision regarding the demarcation of the subject of study" (1987: 27, 28). Fernando Calderón has also observed that "theoretical analysis of social movements is limited at present; it might be said to be under construction" (1986: 331). If we look back at the construction of social movements and new social movements discourse, we can see that its emergence and evolution throughout the decade has been very much determined by a fourfold dynamic, which has greatly shaped and limited the inquiry: the construction of the old as a way to specify the new; a

theory of crisis and transformation from one regime to another; a series
of empirical studies done in the region; and a number of theories and
categories used to conceptualize the movements.

The Construction of the "Old" as a Way to Specify the "New."

Much of the recent literature on social movements and new social move-
ments takes for granted the fact that a significant transformation has taken
place, perhaps the coming of a new period altogether.[9] The "old" is often
yoked to analyses of modernization or dependency; to politics centered
around traditional actors like parties, vanguards, and the working class
who struggle for the control of the State; and to a view of society as
composed of more or less immutable structures and class relations that
only great changes (i.e., massive development schemes or revolutionary
upheavals) can alter in a significant way. The "new," by contrast, is
invoked in: analyses based not on structures but on social actors; the
promotion of democratic, egalitarian and participatory styles of politics;
and the search not for grand structural transformations but rather for the
construction of identities and greater autonomy through modifications in
everyday practices and beliefs.

   Social movement discourse is thus divided into two orders — the old
and the new — characterized by specific historical features. In the pro-
cess, the many continuities between the two regimes — as well as the
ways in which, for instance, old styles of politics are still pervasive
among the new movements — are overlooked. Equally important, the past
is endowed with features that are not completely accurate (for instance,
the claim that all styles of politics in the past were clientilistic and
non-participatory). To acknowledge the continuities existing between the
two periods — both at the level of theories of politics, development, the
economy, etc., and that of popular practices — is important, as a few
researchers have pointed out (Mires 1987; Cardoso 1987; Alvarez
1989)[10]. In sum, a more rigorous characterization of the nature of the
change that is taking place is needed.

A Theory of Crisis or Transformation from Old to New.

The demise of old models is arguably brought about by the failure of the
developmentalist state to bring about lasting improvements, and of polit-
ical mechanisms, on either Left or Right, to deal with that failure. More-
over, the untenability of the old models is reflected in the present crisis.
This dual crisis of paradigms and economies is forcing a new situation, a
"social reconfiguration," as Mires (1987) has aptly put it. For most ob-
servers, the crisis of the post-World War II models, centered around the
agency of the modernizing bourgeoisie and the working class, necessarily
entails the dissolution of the political discourses of these social actors,

thus paving the way for new voices and political manifestations. Beyond these general assertions, however, most talk about the crisis is imprecise at best. It is conceptualized mostly in economic and political terms, but many questions remain; for instance, what are the inherent contradictions of today's models? What specific problems of system control seem to be critical? What structures are being strained? How are legitimation, fiscal and economic crises interrelated in specific Latin American countries?[11]

Other questions are raised by the premise that culture and ideology are embedded in production and political processes in complex ways. What cultural features seem to pose limits to accumulation? To the persistence of old political forms? Is the loosening of economic and political structures leading to new traditions and identities? What specific institutions are disintegrating? What groups of people feel their identity particularly threatened, and in what ways? If the post-War systems that define group identity are losing their power of integration, what are the new systems for identity formation? What new goals and values are being formulated? What new discourses are being put in circulation as the usual mechanisms for social and cultural discourse production are upset? These problems do not emerge simply in relation to a concept of crisis that takes at face value the very real and dramatic dislocations that Latin America suffers today; to understand them, it is necessary to probe deeper into the shifts and fluctuations in institutional arrangements, the meanings and practices that are also occurring, in part, as a result of the crisis. Recent studies are beginning to tackle these issues.

Empirical Studies of Social Movements.

The number and quality of studies of social movements in Latin America has grown steadily since the early 1980s. Although urban popular movements have figured prominently among those studied, Christian based communities, peasant mobilizations, new types of workers' organizations and novel forms of popular protest (for basic needs and local autonomy, for example) have also been the subject of significant research. Increasing attention is being paid to women's and ethnic movements and grassroots movements of various kinds; on the other hand, few studies exist of the gay (Mc Rae 1990, 1992) and ecology movements (Viola 1986; García 1992). Human rights and defense of life issues, as well as youth forms of protest, have been important in a few countries. Civic movements of various kinds and regional movements complete the list of the most visible movements as they have appeared until today in Latin American scholarly and political literature.

The most complete study of recent social movements to this date is the ten country study carried out by the Latin American Social Science Council (CLACSO) under the general direction of Fernando Calderón (Calderón 1986).[12] Although not intended as a rigorous comparative

study, it did provide an insightful view of the most important movements in each country. The study examines the relationships among crisis, movements and democracy, and the possible contribution of the movements "to construct[ing] new social orders, propitiat[ing] new models of development and promot[ing] the emergence of new utopias" (p. 12). The exploration of the existence of new tendencies towards greater autonomy and pluralism, less dependence on the state, and new values of solidarity and participation are also part of the agenda. In sum, the study purports to seek in the movements "evidence of a profound transformation of the social logic . . . a new form of doing politics and a new form of sociality . . . more importantly, a new form of relating the political and the social, the public and the private, in such a way that everyday practices can be included side by side with the politico-institutional" (Jelin 1986: 21).

One question that arises immediately regarding this provocative statement is how this "profound transformation," will be conceptualized. Here we find again a tautological proposition, since social movements are defined precisely in terms of what they supposedly bring about: new forms of politics and sociality whose definition in turn is left un-problematized. The "new forms of doing politics" — as characterized in most of the literature — comprise not a new conception of politics but an expansion of the political domain such that it encompasses everyday practices. Even the future of the movements is seen in relatively conventional terms: small organizations will branch out vertically and horizontally, non-party formations will give way to parties, short-term protest to long-term efforts. Similarly, social scientists see social movements as pursuing goals that look very much like conventional development objectives (chiefly, the satisfaction of basic needs), thus revealing that the more radical questions of the redefinition of the political and the dismantling of development are overlooked. This is compounded by the fact that there is no agreement as to what counts as a "movement" or as "new," a point to be discussed in the next section of the essay.

Despite these difficulties, studies of social movements have been successful in clarifying a number of macro issues. The relationships among crisis, social movements and democracy have been broadly defined; causes for the emergence of new actors have been identified, ranging from the exclusionary character of development, increased fragmentation and precarious urbanization to general social decomposition and violence, the growth of the informal sector, loss of confidence in the government and political parties, breakdown of cultural mechanisms, and so forth. It is argued, moreover, that the concomitant displacement of spaces and identities (from the working class to new actors, from the factory to the city, from the public sphere to the household, from the plaza to the neighborhood, etc.) accounts for the new movements. Some of these are seen as achieving a transition "from the micro to the macro, and from protest to

proposal," as they connect with each other in the building of coalitions and political movements, such as the Workers' Party in Brazil, the M-19 Democractic Alliance in Colombia, and the Cardenista movement in Mexico (Fals Borda 1992).

The CLACSO project also offers a set of basic features to characterize social movements: their structures of participation; their temporality, including synchronic and diachronic aspects; their multiple and heterogeneous spread within a geographical space; their relation to the crisis and to other social forces; their effect on social relations; and their self-image and conception of their everyday life. Finally, studies have also identified a series of criteria for the realization of the democratizing potential of the movements: the extent to which they undermine prevalent authoritarian practices; the extent of their pluralizing and diversifying effects on dominant, homogenizing and reductionist forces; the relative weight of autonomy versus clientilism and dependence on the State and conventional political institutions; the possibility of bringing about new economic forms which transcend the rationality of the market; and the possible role played by Latin America within the international division of labor currently in the making (Calderón 1986).

Theories of Social Movements.

These new intellectual and political challenges have provoked a significant renewal in social science activities, such as the reappraisal of civil society (although accompanied by renewed violence and factionalism, and in part as a response to these latter), the importance of the micro-sociology and politics of everyday life, the possibility for new types of pluralist democracies and alternative ways of satisfying basic needs. For Calderón, Piscitelli and Reyna (1992), the new research is being conducted in at least five major areas: theories of social movements; new types of class analysis, especially in the Central American case; community studies originating in reinvigorated communitarian traditions in urban areas (for instance, popular kitchens formed on the basis of relations of solidarity) and rural areas (peasant movements); the transformation of the catholic church; and new social movements proper (women's, gay, ecology and culturally based movements).

There is, then, a sort of "thematic renewal" which, despite conflicting demands and the existence of conservative tendencies, such as neo-liberalism and greater normalization of research in some cases, is having a great impact on the social sciences (López Maya, ed. 1991). European and North American theories, to be sure, continue to be important, and this is particularly true of social movement research. In this area, post-structuralism, post-Marxism and postmodernism have shaped European efforts and significantly influenced Latin American thought. But just as important a line of research is the question of "whether in spite of the richness

of these foreign analyses there may not be something present in the social movements of the region impervious to the analytical categories provided by European theorists" (Calderón, Piscitelly and Reyna 1992: 21). Moreover, these authors conclude, it is Latin American researchers who are leading the way in the reformulation of social movement theory and methodology through continuous reflection on the practice of the movements. In sum, the production of theory in one place and its application in another is no longer an acceptable practice. There are multiple sites of production and multiple mediations in the generation and production of theory. Social movement work provides a good example of "traveling" theories and theorists in the post-colonial world.[13]

Social Movement Theory: Historicity and Hegemony.

Jean Cohen (1985) has introduced a useful distinction between those social movements primarily concerned with strategy, organization, resources, interests, conflict and the like, and which predominate in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, and those which emphasize the process by which social actors struggle to constitute new identities as a means to open democratic spaces for more autonomous action. Theories based on the latter have furnished the most important set of categories used implicitly or explicitly in Latin American research. However, as Alvarez (1989) has remarked, disregard for the resource mobilization paradigm has had a high cost in Latin America. In fact, many types of popular actions have been crudely characterized in terms of groups "reclaiming their identity" or searching for "new ways of doing politics," leaving unexplained complex issues that impinge on the movements, such as organizational and institutional development, the role of external factors, constraints and opportunities vis-à-vis local or national politics, and so on. Some authors (Alvarez 1989; Tarrow 988) argue that both paradigms should be combined for a more realistic portrayal of social movements in Latin America and elsewhere.

The focus of the identity-centered paradigm is primarily on social actors and collective action. This is true of the three most influential European conceptualizations of social movements in Latin America, those of Alain Touraine, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and Alberto Melucci. Even a brief presentation and critical review of the complex work of these authors is clearly beyond the scope of the present essay (see Escobar 1992); it may be useful, however, to review briefly those notions that seem to have found special resonance in the Latin American literature, and to venture a critical assessment of their application in this context.

Historicity and Social Change

For Touraine (post-industrial) society, for the first time in history, pro-
duces itself by a complex set of actions performed upon itself. Social
action can no longer be seen as the result of some metasocial principle —
God, Reason, Evolution, the Economy or the State. Society today is the
result of a set of systems of action chracterized by the presence of actors
who may have conflictual interests but who share certain cultural orien-
tations. On this view, social movements are not "dramatic events" but
rather "the work that society performs upon itself" (1981: 29). This work
has as its goal the control of *historicity*, that is, "the set of cultural models
that rule social practices" (Touraine 1988a: 8). Such control is, for Toura-
ine, embodied in the epistemic, economic and ethical models that are
always at stake. What, then, is a social movement?

> A social movement is the action, both culturally oriented and socially
> conflictual, of a social class defined by its position of domination or
> dependency in the mode of appropriation of historicity, and by the
> cultural models of investment, knowledge and morality toward which
> the social movement itself is oriented [1988b: 68].

The essential feature of this definition is that actors recognize the
stakes in terms of a cultural project; in other words, what is at stake in a
social movement is historicity itself, not merely organizational forms,
services, means of production and the like. This leads Touraine to con-
clude that most forms of social mobilization observed today in Latin
America are not social movements proper, but rather struggles or socio-
historical movements which involve not the self-production of society so
much as the process of historical change and development. They are, in a
sense, modernizing orientations. This is so because, in the Latin American
"dependent" case, the central relation is given by the interaction of
modernization, social actors, and the state; the state intervenes in all
aspects of life so that actors are above all actors in the development
process, a process which is often led by exogenous forces. At stake, then,
is not historicity but greater participation in the political system. This
contrasts sharply with post-industrial society, where change is endoge-
nous, actors are classes, actions are social movements, and socio-eco-
nomic and political categories largely correspond to one another. In sum,
what in one case can be described as an excess of the social, in the Latin
American case becomes an excess of the political, given the centrality of
the state as an all powerful actor in steering the process of development
and change (Touraine 1987, 1988b).

Touraine's conceptualization is open to at least two major criticisms.
First, his inquiry is determined at the outset by his choice of theoretical
horizon — the Western European experience; it is also informed by post-
World War II political discourse (e.g., his characterization of the "Latin
American system of action" [1987, 1988b] still bears the marks of

CEPAL, dependency and modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s), and by adherence to a compartmentalized view of reality that envisions the social, political, economic and cultural as autonomous spheres. The practices of today's social movements, however, make it clear that the categories and conditions (dependence on the State, reliance on exogenous agents of change, hyperpoliticization of the public sphere, and the centrality of development) by which Latin America has been construed, and that Touraine takes for granted, are precisely what they pretend to put in question.

A second questionable aspect of Touraine's work is his notion of "levels of historicity," according to which only post-industrial society has achieved the "highest level of historicity," namely, that of self-production. Traditional societies, on the contrary, still *"lie within history"* (1981: 105) and their ability to produce the cultural models by which they function is more limited since the distance that historicity requires (from God, oneself and the world as object) has not been achieved. This distancing would require the destruction of community by a group that becomes a ruling class. On this view, Latin America can only achieve this highest level through industrialization and development. As in other eurocentric discourses (including, as we will see, that of Laclau and Mouffe), the Third World is represented as lacking historical agency or, in the best of cases, as only having a diminished form of agency if compared with the European case.

But why, one may ask, would this type of objectifying distancing — which, as we know, is the essential feature of modernity — be the only route to historicity? For if it is true that the modern West has been the first society to turn the apparatus of its objectifying knowledge upon itself (Foucault 1970), it is also true that this kind of self-reflection is only one possibility among many. Recent anthropological studies focus, for instance, on the sophisticated historical consciousness of the Saramakas of Surinam (Price 1983, 1990), eighteenth century Hawaiians (Sahlins 1985), the Ilongot of the Philippines (Rosaldo 1980), or today's Colombian peasants (Fals Borda 1986). These studies also register the manifold forms of resistance — with varying degrees of self-reflective consciousness — practiced as an affirmation and defense of a way of life by non-Western peoples under conditions of colonialism (Taussig 1980; Guha 1983; Fals Borda 1984; Scott 1985; Comaroff 1985; Ong 1987). And finally, they emphasize the weighty presence of myth in real life and history and, in general, the powerful effects of seemingly unconscious constructions of meaning on reality (Taussig 1987). Touraine, by comparison, seems stuck within a philosophy of history governed by teleology and rationalism, as evidenced by the features he imputes to social movements.

Nevertheless, Touraine's insight that conflict cannot be separated from culture is of paramount importance. In the past, cultural orientations were not given due importance. Yet many questions remain regarding the relation between social movements and culture. Historicity originates in a background of cultural meanings, according to a dynamic that includes the interaction of tradition and modernity, domination and resistance, as well as the discursive articulation of cultural contents, the establishment of orders and social relations, and struggles around all of these issues. These processes — and the effect of social movements on them — are not yet well understood. The effect of social movements on intersubjective meanings has remained largely intractable, and so have related issues like the self-interpretation of movements, their interpretation of dominant identities, and their consolidation of contestatory positions on the basis of those interpretations. Moreover, one may ask, how is a "political culture" carved out of a domain of background cultural practices in a given society? What in this background, and through what process, is articulated in a political discourse? How does Western style democracy — as a practice that depends on a particular historical and cultural experience — fare in other socio-cultural contexts?

New Social Movements and the Hegemonic Form of Politics

The work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Laclau 1985, 1988; Mouffe 1984, 1988), situated within post-structuralist and post-Marxist theorizing of the past two decades, represents a significant departure from dominant political theories regarding the agent of social change, the structuring of political spaces, and the nature of historical transformation. In the first place, social practice is for them fundamentally discursive; it is a process in which the meaning of human action is constructed. Secondly, meaning cannot be permanently fixed; it is always changing such that even the very recognition of identity relies on an ongoing process of articulation of meanings. Dominant hegemonic practices tend toward closure of the social (that is, to project a "society"; for instance, the New World Order); in the process of so doing, however, antagonisms emerge, which in turn make possible the emergence of new actors and discourses. In post-industrial society, the main antagonisms took form within the hegemonic formation that arose after World War II. Characterized by pervasive processes of commodification, bureaucratization and massification of life, it is the spawning ground for the contradictions expressed by the new social movements.

This new political situation takes shape in the wake of the "decline of a form of politics for which the division of the social into two antagonistic camps [the bourgeoisie and the working class] is an original and immutable datum, prior to all hegemonic construction" (1985: 151). In the new situation there is no privileged political subject, but a political space

defined by a plurality of collective actors each struggling within their own sphere (workers, women, students, ecology activists...). The new politics emphasizes the *process* by which each actor or social movement articulates a position for itself and with other movements. This is also the means for identity-formation and, in the long run, for a counter-hegemonic formation achieved through the articulation of various movements. This process takes different forms at the center and at the periphery of the capitalist world economy:

> In the [advanced] countries, the proliferation of points of antagonism permits the multiplication of democratic struggles, but these struggles, given their diversity, do not tend to constitute a 'people,' that is...to divide the political space into two antagonistic fields. On the contrary, in the countries of the Third World, imperialist exploitation and the predominance of brutal and centralized forms of domination tend from the beginning to endow the popular struggle with a center, with a single and clearly defined element. Here the division of the political space into two fields is present from the outset, but the diversity of democratic struggles is more reduced.... We will therefore speak of *democratic* struggles where these imply a plurality of political spaces [the center], and of *popular* struggles where certain discourses *tendentially* construct the division of a single political space into two opposed fields [the Third World] [Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 131, 137].

Like Touraine, Laclau and Mouffe draw a sharp distinction between the "advanced" countries and the "Third World."[14] The "hegemonic form of politics," based on the articulation of a plurality of positions and movements, only exists "in societies in which the democratic revolution has crossed a certain threshold" (1985: 166). This form of politics opens the way for a "radical pluralist democracy," one in which the gains of the democratic imaginary are extended to ever deeper domains through the maximum autonomization of spheres. But can we not argue that the post-War hegemonic formation of development has also resulted, in the Third World, in a multiplicity of antagonisms and identities — peasants, "urban marginals," "those belonging to the informal sector," "women bypassed by development," the "illiterate," "indigenous peoples who do not modernize," etc. — , that is, all those victims of development who are the subjects of recent forms of protest?

Laclau and Mouffe's eurocentric, post-industrial bias is subject to another emendation: the notion of "threshold" implies some sort of evolution, at the same time that it leaves unproblematized a dominant notion of democracy, that which was inaugurated with the French Revolution and the "Rights of Man." It remains to be seen to what extent *Homo Aequalis*, and its close companion, *Homo Oeconomicus*, represent all cultures, genders and races. Contemporary social movements in the Third World cast a dark shadow on this powerful universal of modernity. It would thus

seem more appropriate to say that Latin America oscillates between two
logics, two forms of politics: a logic of popular struggles in a relatively
("tendentially") unified political space (against oligarchies, imperialism
and developmentalist states); and a logic of "democratic" struggles (how
else are we to name this emerging movement?) in a plural space. Both
have to be the result of articulations, given the precarious and extremely
unstable, open character of the social. Perhaps only by working out a
politics through these two logics will Latin America arrive at a more
autonomous and satisfactory political practice and social order.

   Laclau and Mouffe's notion of politics as an articulatory process, like
Touraine's notion of the self-production of society, highlights the produc-
tion of social life by social actors in changing and conflictual fields of
meaning and social practices. Alberto Melucci (1980, 1985, 1988a,
1988b, 1989) emphasizes another important aspect for understanding
many contemporary social movements (such as the women's, ecology and
peace movements, but many others as well): their symbolic character. For
Melucci and his co-workers, social movements "announce to society that
a fundamental problem exists in a given area. They have a growing
symbolic function; one can probably speak of a *prophetic function*. They
are a kind of *new media*" (Melucci 1985: 797). Contemporary collective
action, moreover,

> assumes the form of networks submerged in everyday life. Within
> these networks there is an experimentation with and direct practice of
> alternative frameworks of sense, as a result of a personal commitment
> which is submerged and almost invisible.... The 'movements' emerge
> only in limited areas, for limited phases and by means of moments of
> mobilization which are the other, complementary phase of the sub-
> merged networks.... What nourishes [collective action] is the daily
> production of alternative frameworks of meaning, on which the net-
> works themselves are founded and live from day to day.... This is
> because conflict takes place principally on symbolic grounds, by
> challenging and upsetting the dominant codes upon which social rela-
> tionships are founded in high density informational systems. The mere
> existence of a symbolic challenge is in itself a method of unmasking
> the dominant codes, a different way of perceiving and naming the
> world [Melucci 1988a: 248].

   Movements, then, cannot be understood independently of the "sub-
merged" cultural background out of which they emerge. This also sug-
gests that it would be more appropriate to speak of *movement networks* or
movement areas, in which the movement itself would be included along
with the "users" of the cultural goods and services produced by the
movement. "The normal situation of today's 'movements'" — Melucci
concludes (1985: 800) — "is a network of small groups submerged in
everyday life that requires a personal involvement in experiencing and
practicing cultural innovation." In the Third World, of course, movements

have to practice cultural innovation and techniques of survival and of social and economic transformation. This, however, does not diminish the importance of the cultural. In Latin America, social movements are economic, political, *and* cultural struggles, that is, struggles over meanings, from the nature of national development to everyday practices (Escobar 1992). Interpreting Venezuelan social movements, for instance, Uribe and Lander (1988) find that some of the movements elicit changes in the cultural-symbolic framework that result in new modes of construction of the political. Given the growing importance of mass media, the construction of political facts increasingly relies on the symbolic effectiveness of the movements. Social movements, in sum, bring about social practices which operate in part through the constitution of spaces for the creation of meaning. To the extent that they are also inevitably concerned with matters of economic and social transformation, they link together economic, social and political problematics within an overarching cultural field.

Inquiry into everyday life and social movements is also at the center of debates around the question of modernity and postmodernity which, although of recent origin, have become quite lively in Latin America. While it is recognized that modernity has left an indelible mark in the continent, most scholars also stress the uneven and heterogenous character of modernization projects. Heterogenous too are the cultural matrices of Latin American societies, many of them (indigenous, African and hybrid forms) not originating in European modernity, and as such providing reservoirs of alternative rationalities. Pre-modern (or non-modern), modern and postmodern forms coexist in complex cconfigurations in the continent. There is also a very real sense in which modernity is also in crisis in Latin America. The crises of global capital and globalizing narratives — especially that of development — have intensified debate on culture and society in Latin America perhaps more than elsewhere. At stake are not only politics and democracy, but a whole civilizational design based on modern reason.

The emergence of new practices and new social actors is recognized by many as the most striking and hopeful sign of these crises. This is why postmodernism is at once welcomed and resisted in Latin America. It is welcomed as a new intellectual horizon but resisted to the extent that it does not lead clearly to the formulation of alternative social projects. Many Latin American scholars insist that for postmodernism to be of use, the questions it poses have to be reworked in keeping with the local interests of Latin American peoples. Generally speaking, the task ahead is the construction of collective imaginaries capable of orienting social and political action. Epistemologically, it is necessary to appeal to non-reductionistic and non-teleological notions of politics and development; politically, the task is to foster the democratizing potential of the new

social subjects. The transition to some sort of postmodernity, however, cannot be conceived as a higher stage of humanity from the perspective of the Center. Postmodernism's toppling of the illusion of modernity has to be accompanied in Latin America by the resignification of social reality, and this entails posing again the questions of social justice and of the constitution of social orders.[15]

Other Issues in Social Movement Research: Knowledge, Politics and Needs.

What follows is a brief presentation of a few issues in social movement theory, not included in the well known theories reviewed above, but which might be of certain relevance in future discussions. They are presented in the manner of preliminary hypotheses concerning the existence of a subaltern domain of politics, the relation of social movements to the State, the autopoietic character of social movements, and the centrality of needs interpretation for collective action.

A Subaltern Domain of Politics

The recent work of the *Subaltern Studies* Group of Indian historians provides rich insights for thinking "the political" in a new manner.[16] According to this group, even in the most progressive historical accounts of popular actions, the rebels' acts are either seen as "pre-political" or "spontaneous," or incorporated as elements of another history with another subject: the Raj, nationalism, the People, socialism. In the last instance, this amounts to a negation of the subject's history by the historian. Historical discourse, "even of a radical kind...has still to go a long way before it can prove that the insurgent can rely on its performance to recover his place in history" (Guha 1988a: 84). This is largely due to the fact that conventional views of politics, of the Right or the Left (even Gandhi), are indelibly shaped by the institutions of colonialism (British colonialism in the Indian case), thus overlooking the existence of a whole different political domain:

> For parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous societies or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes and groups.... This was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter.... The experience of exploitation and labour endowed this politics with many idioms, norms and values which put it in a category apart from elite politics [Guha 1988b: 40]

The recognition of the existence of the subaltern domain of politics is the basis, according to Guha, for developing alternative conceptions of

popular consciousness and mobilization in their own right, that is, independent of conventional politics. For instance, in the case of peasant resistance in colonial India, mobilization was achieved not through vertical but horizontal integration; it relied on traditional forms, such as kinship and territoriality; it sometimes grew out of outrage, even crime, to insurgency and uprisings; it was collective and often destructive and total; and it practiced various styles of class, ethnic and religious solidarity. Nationalist leaders, on the other hand, tried to make the masses conform to a conventional politics with recognizable organizations and strategies (Guha 1983).

Much of the discussion of social movements in Latin America assumes a single political domain. It can be argued, on the one hand, that popular struggles sometimes resemble Guha's notion of subalternity and that, on the other, one of the effects of bourgeois hegemony has been the belief in a single political domain. Most analysts, in trying to get at the "new forms of doing politics" or the "new political culture," still seem to be observing the movements from the conventional point of view. In other words, much of the discussion of social movements still relies on and shelters the political (and economic) culture of the West. With few exceptions, the hypothesis of the existence of a subaltern domain has been overlooked in Latin America precisely as theorists try to recuperate popular resistance for a theoretico-practical discussion of political practice and process. To be sure, the conventional view of politics has produced a pre-understanding which shapes any "normal" understanding of the political, entrenched as it is in structures and everyday practices (including the state, interests groups, parties, forms of rationality and behavior such as strikes, visible mobilizations, etc.). A redefinition of this situation cannot be achieved without changing political discourse. This is why in Latin America the question of the location of meaning is an essentially political question that has to be answered in the terrains of history, politics and dominant representations. Only by rethinking politics in this way will another space of history that registers popular experience be opened up (Lechner 1988; Quijano 1988).

The Exteriority of Social Movements in Relation to the State

A critical reflection on the politics of knowledge and of the State is also crucial for transforming our understanding of social movements and development. Although social movements are usually thought of in connection with the State, they bear a relation of exteriority to the State apparatus. In the first place, relations of power extend well beyond the State, implicating a whole network of other relations (at the level of knowledge, the family, etc.) (Foucault 1980a, 1980b). Social movements may actually make difficult the consolidation of extra-social bodies such as the State. If the State implies an arborescent structure (i.e., unity,

hierarchy, order), that of new social movements might be rhizomic: assuming diverse forms, establishing unexpected connections, adopting flexible structures, moving in various dimensions (the family, the neighborhood, the region.... Social movements are defined more in terms of change and becoming than as fixed states, structures, and programs. They might even be considered "nomadic" forms which, although in perpetual interaction with the State and other megaforms like multinational corporations, are nevertheless irreducible to them.[17]

A similar situation is found in the field of knowledge: two types of science, State science and "nomad" science, coexist, the former always trying to appropriate the contents of the latter. State science proceeds by territorializing, creating boundaries and hierarchies, producing certainties and theorems, identities. Nomad (or popular) knowledge has a very different form of operation, opposed to that of the State and the economy, with its division of the social space into rulers and governed, intellectual and manual labor. Nomad science stays closer to the everyday, seeking not to extract constants but to follow life and matter in itineraries that shift according to changing variables. While State science reproduces the world according to a fixed point of view, nomad science follows events and solves problems by means of real life operations, not by summoning the power of a conceptual apparatus or a pre-established form of intervention (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).[18]

The exteriority of new social movements in relation to the State, as well as the existence of a domain of popular knowledge, are hinted at in some of the social movement literature. Fals Borda (1992), for instance, sees Latin American social movements as fostering "parallel networks of power" and a kind of "neo-anarchism" resulting from the movements' search for greater autonomy from the State and conventional political parties. Some see many of today's social movements as "nomad forms" which, although expanding the cultural and political terrain, may or may not coalesce into larger networks of action (Arditi 1988). Similarly, other systems of knowledge are invoked in the literature on alternatives (Apffel Marglin and Marglin, eds. 1990) to development, which as a State order, bypasses people's experience; new types of knowledge are thus needed which do not enact this violent abstraction. Such alternative forms of knowledge are practiced in the popular domain, particularly among women (Shiva 1989) and indigenous people. Research on participatory action is based on this belief, focusing on the encounter between modern and popular forms of knowledge (Fals Borda 1988; Fals Borda and Rahman, eds. 1991).

The Autopoietic Character of Social Movements

As self-producing and self-organizing entities, social movements can be characterized as *autopoietic*. Through their own action they establish a

distinct presence in their social and cultural environment. They produce themselves and the larger social order through their own organizing processes (sets of relations or articulations among key elements). They create a social phenomenology, so to speak, in the very social forms they produce as autonomous entities. It is necessary, then, to examine both the internal organization of these units and the history of their interaction with their environment. Our knowledge of this history, of course, can only be fragmentary and dependent on our own systems of interpretation. The interactions, too, may trigger important structural changes within a movement or even its destruction (when the basic organization is dissolved). But movements also trigger changes in the environment ("society").

As observers, we characterize these interactions between movements and environment in terms of "politics," "economic conditions," and the like. (In a sense we as observers do not "see" social movements but rather experience our field of categories through our observations and theorizations). Moreover, we tend to think that it is these latter categories that determine what happens inside the movement, which is only partly true, for it is the movement's organization that largely determines its structural changes, even if triggered by its coupling with its environment. The result of this history of interactions is the creation of life worlds and social orders. Thus, movements would not merely be a reflection of the current crisis or any other principle, but would have to be understood in terms of their own rationality and the organization they themselves produce. Like hypotheses of the existence of subaltern domains of politics and knowledge, this concept points us in the direction of greater awareness of the mediations that inevitably condition our perceptions of people's histories.[19]

The Centrality of the Politics of Needs Interpretation for Social Movements and Alternative Development

The question of needs implies the politics of knowledge and of the State: the knowledge of experts that certify "needs," and the institutionalization of "social services" by the State. Needs discourses elaborated by development experts, universities, social welfare agents, and all kinds of professionals can be seen as "bridge discourses, which mediate the relations between social movements and the state . . . expert discourses play this mediating role by translating the politicized needs claimed by oppositional movements into potential objects of state administration" (Fraser 1989: 11). Most often, the interpretation of people's needs is taken as unproblematic, although it can easily be shown to be otherwise. There is an officially recognized idiom in which needs can be expressed: means of needs satisfaction position people as "clients" in relation to the State, and models of needs satisfaction are stratified along class, gender and ethnic

lines. In other words, needs discourses constitute veritable "acts of intervention" (166) to the extent that the political status of a given need is an arena of struggle that is mediated by its interpretation.

Social movements necessarily operate within dominant systems of need interpretation and satisfaction, but they tend to politicize interpretations; that is, they refuse to see needs as just "economic" or "domestic." This contributes to the consolidation of social identities on the part of subaltern groups, especially if they manage to invent new forms of discourse for interpreting needs. "In oppositional discourses, needs talk is a moment in the self-constitution of new collective agents or social movements" (Fraser 1989: 171). (Of course, this process does not go unchallenged: witness the proliferation of "reprivatization" discourses in the U.S. and elsewhere, not to mention the "austerity measures" in Latin America and Eastern Europe). It is a problematic "moment," since it usually entails the involvement of the State and the mediation by those who have expert knowledge. (In the Third World, with the State in crisis, however, non-governmental organizations increasingly fulfill this role, thus creating interesting opportunities for action in some cases). Whereas expert discourses (such as those of the agents of development) reposition groups as "cases" for the State and the development apparatus, thus depoliticizing needs, popular actors challenge expert interpretations with varying degrees of success; for instance, rural development programs may spawn movements for the recuperation of land.

It is clear that in the Third World the process of needs interpretation and satisfaction is inextricably linked to the development apparatus. The "basic human needs" strategy, pushed by the World Bank and adopted by most international agencies, has played a crucial role in this regard (see, for instance, World Bank 1975; Leipziger and Streeten 1981). This strategy, however, is based on a liberal human rights discourse and on the rational, scientific assessment and measurement of "needs"; lacking a significant link to people's everyday experience, "basic human needs" discourse does not foster greater political participation. This is why the struggle over needs interpretation is a key political arena of struggle for new social actors involved in redirecting the apparatuses of development and the State.[20] The challenge for social movements — and the "experts" who work with them — is to come up with new ways of talking about needs and of demanding their satisfaction in ways that bypass the rationality of development with its "basic needs" discourse. The "struggle over needs" must be practiced in a way conducive to redefining development and the nature of the political. Finally, the language of "needs" itself must be reinterpreted as one of the most devastating legacies of modernity and development, as Ivan Illich (1992) argues. These are open challenges that remain to be explored.[21]

Conclusion

The possibility for redefining development, this paper argues, rests largely with the action of social movements. Development is understood here as a particular set of discursive power relations that construct a representation of the Third World, whose critical analysis lays bare the processes by which Latin America and the rest of the Third World have been produced as "underdeveloped." Such a critique also contributes to devising means of liberating Third World societies from the imaginary of development and for lessening the Third World's dependence on the episteme of modernity. While this critical understanding of development is crucial for those working within social movements, awareness of the actions of the latter is equally essential for those seeking to transform development.

As regards social movement research, significant ambiguities and confusions still exist. An examination of certain notions provides some clues for clarification. A critical view of modernity, for instance, emphasizes the need to resist post-Enlightment universals (such as those of economy, development, politics and liberation); a reflection on historicity allows us to foreground the cultural aspects of the new movements; the discussion of meaning and background cultural practices provides a way to study the connection between cultural norms, definitions of social life and movement organization; this discussion also provides a conceptual tool for exploring the more profound effects of social movements, namely, those that operate at the level of life's basic norms.

In a similar vein, the notion of autopoiesis suggests that social movements are not merely a reflection of the crisis, but have to be understood in terms of the organization they themselves produce. They are, in important ways, self-producing, self-referential systems, even if their effects disseminate across large networks or areas of economic, social and cultural life. In conceptualizing social movements as autopoietic entities, conventional definitions of the political, of knowledge, and of the relation between social movements and the State need to be subjected to scrutiny. Even if popular knowledge and politics are in continuous relation to the State, they nevertheless may have their own rationality and rules of operation. All politics, finally, can be said to be articulatory, although the specific nature of the societies in question may dictate the more or less fragmented character of political space. If in the Latin American case the issues and forms are different from other cases, the search for autonomy and the control of historicity are also pressing issues for the movements.

To conclude, we may postulate the existence of three major discourses in Latin America with the potential to articulate — and are actually articulating in many cases — forms of struggle:

1. The discourse of the fulfillment of the democratic imaginary (including "needs," economic and social justice, human rights, class, gender and

ethnic equality, etc.). This first possibility originates in the egalitarian discourses of the West, although it does not necessarily have to follow the West's experience. This first discourse offers the possibility for material and institutional gains and the radicalization of democracy towards more pluralist societies.

2. The discourse of difference, including cultural difference, alterity, autonomy and the right of each society to self-determination. This second possibility originates in a variety of sources: anti-imperialist struggles, those of ethnic groups and women, the challenge to European ethnocentrism and conventional epistemologies, revisions of history, etc. The potential here is for the strategic release and furthering of some of these struggles.

3. Anti-development discourses proper, which originate in the current crisis of development and the work of grassroots groups. The potential here is for more radical transformations of the modern capitalist order and the search for alternative ways of organizing societies and economies, of satisfying needs, of healing and living.

It should be clear by now that struggles in the Third World cannot be merely extensions of the "democratic revolution" or for the consolidation of modernity, although some of this must obviously happen in order to weather with the precariousness of life conditions and democratize social and economic life. The recent struggles in the Third World go well beyond the principles of equality, relations of production and democracy; moreover, they constitute arenas for redefining and recovering these terms. Even the possibility of building a "counter-hegemonic formation" through articulation, as Laclau and Mouffe suggest, seems to be contrary to the movements' practices and would evince a type of rationality that popular movements may not share. This does not mean that alliances may not take place. They certainly do and must. In fact, networks of popular movements are appearing in several countries and internationally (in the case of indigenous peoples and women). But social movements are not ruled by the logic of all or nothing; they must consider the contradictory and multiple voices present in such experiences without reducing them to an unitary logic. Postmodern discussions of the nature of the political space, the fragmentation of identities, the de-totalization of certain narratives (including "development") lead, in Latin America, to new criteria for the creation of collective orders. Rather than resulting in political ambiguity and a loss of sense of history, postmodern insights bring about a demand for new historical directions that foster democratization and the healing of violence. If the decentered character of social life is admitted, the need for certain structuration and the invention of more fluid narratives is also recognized and welcomed.

In the long run, it is a matter of generating new ways of seeing, of renewing social and cultural self-descriptions by displacing the catego-

ries with which Third World groups have been constructed by dominant forces, and by producing views of reality which make visible the numerous loci of power of those forces; a matter of "regenerating people's spaces" or creating new ones, with those who have actually survived the age of modernity and development by resisting it or by insinuating themselves creatively in the circuits of capital and modernization. As Ashis Nandy put it, "the recovery of the other selves of cultures and communities, selves not defined by the dominant global consciousness, may turn out to be the first task of social criticism and political activism and the first responsibility of intellectual stock-taking in the first decades of the coming century" (1989: 265). Perhaps social movements, as symbols of resistance to the dominant politics of knowledge and organization of the world, provide some paths in the direction of this calling, that is, for the re-imagining of the "Third World" and a post-development era.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. The literature reviewed in this paper refers primarily to Latin America. India is another important place of scholarly and political production on social movements and grassroots mobilization. See for instance Shet (1987), Kothari (1987), and Shiva (1989).

2. "There are times in life," Foucault goes on to say, "when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all" (1985: 8). The Third World seems to have reached this point in relation to development.

3. "The power of the [modern] language [of emancipation] has become so enormous that nearly all dissent within the modern world and the modernized Third World has to be cast in the language, to be heard or taken seriously.... Attempts to introduce the language of liberation to those who do not speak it, as a precondition for the latter qualifying for what the moderns call liberation, is a travesty of even the normatives of the modern concept of liberation" (Nandy 1989: 267, 268).

4. "To commit a discourse to speak from within a given consciousness is to disarm it insofar as its critical faculty is made inoperative thereby with regard to that particular consciousness. For no criticism can be fully activated unless its object is distanced from its agency.... All this goes to show that no discourse can oppose a genuinely uncompromising critique to a ruling culture so long as its ideological parameters are the same as those of that very culture. Where then does criticism come from? *From outside the universe of dominance which provides the critique with its object, indeed from another and historically antagonistic universe*" (Guha 1989: 215, 220). Although a purely antagonistic universe probably does not exist, Guha's comment should serve as a guide for cultural critique generally.

5. "Market-friendly development" is the new strategy launched by the World Bank for the 1990s. See World Bank 1991.

6. "Reflection shows us that our image of happiness is thoroughly colored by the time to which the course of our own existence has assigned us.... There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power

to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that" (Benjamin 1969: 253,54).

7. "[T]he substitution of one formation by another is not necessarily carried out at the level of the most general or most easily formalized statements. Only a serial method, as used today by historians, allows us to construct a series around a single point and to seek out other series which might prolong this point in different directions, on the level of other points. There is always a point in space or time when series begin to diverge and become redistributed in a new space, and it is at this point that the break takes place...when a new formation appears, with new rules and series, it never comes all at once, in a single phrase or act of creation, but emerges like a series of 'building blocks', with gaps, traces and reactivations of former elements that survive under the new rule.... One must pursue the different series, travel along the different levels, and cross all thresholds" [Deleuze 1988: 20,21].

8. The analysis of social movements in this section refers primarily to Latin America, where discussions on this topic took off with full force in the early 1980s. The 1983 special issue of *Nueva Sociedad* (1983) on "New Forms of Doing Politics" and David Slater's volume (1985) were very influential in the early discussions. Two of the essays in this last volume (those by Laclau and Evers) were widely read in Latin America in Spanish and Portuguese versions. The literature on social movements and new social movements produced since then is already too vast to be listed here. For a comprehensive review of the literature, see Escobar and Alvarez, eds. 1992.

9. Although the term new social movements became a common concept in the 1980s, many scholars now prefer to use simply "social movements," given the fact that many of so-called new social movements are not new any more. Some still prefer to refer to movements such as the ecology, gay and women's movements as new. For a critique of the concept of new social movements, see Melucci 1988b. Melucci advocates abandoning the term.

10. Cardoso is emphatic in this respect: "It is easy to see that, in this construction, what is new is defined only by contrast with the old; thus, instead of providing definitions of both regimes we merely classify them as distinct and opposed to each other. This operation might make possible the construction of a mobilizing discourse, yet it limits our capacity for explanation" (p. 28). This and other translations from the Spanish and Portuguese are my own.

11. For general theories of crises, see Habermas 1973; O'Connor 1987; Taylor 1985. The political economy of crisis is studied by Amin et al. 1982; O'Connor 1984. For the Latin American case, see Rama 1986; CLACSO 1987.

12. Included in the study are Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Perú, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile and Paraguay. The most important movements studied in each country include human rights and youth movements; urban popular movements; women's movements; new workers' movements; student and ethnic movements; church and ecology movements; and regional, civic and neighborhood movements.

13. One should also point out that it is still European theories (with their abstractness, systematicity and completeness) that are accorded greater prestige in the international division of intellectual labor in many circles. At this level (postmodern epistemological pluralism notwithstanding) the division of the world between epistemological centres and peripheries (as seen from the centre) still has some validity. Latin American production often does not have the "right" epistemological characteristics to be elevated to the rank of "grand theory." Social movement discourse is another case in point.

But the same problem can be seen from the perspective of the politics of the location and travel of theories and theorists (Said 1983; Clifford 1989). The "scramble of locations" in contemporary theoretical production not only challenges the West's position as the "natural" home of theory, but also entails reshufflings of centers and peripheries; for instance, for Touraine, Laclau and Mouffe, and Castells, Latin America — where all of them have spent many years — has become a "center" of theories and insights. In this travel of theories and theorists in the post-colonial context, the West is partly reproduced as the site of enunciation, but also displaced and resisted. Yet in important ways Third World intellectuals, while trying to extricate themselves from the West, do remain bound to it in complex ways: they still share, to a greater or lesser extent, the theoretical imaginary of the West. Yet theoretical production today cannot be seen in simple terms, as produced in one part and applied in

another, but rather as a process of mutiple conversations in a discontinuous terrain (Mani 1989).

14. Such a distinction is already evident in Laclau's preliminary application of his model to Latin America in the Slater volume (1985).

15. On the question of modernity and postmodernity, see the excellent collection by Calderón (Calderón, ed. 1988). See also Quijano 1988; Lechner 1988, García Canclini 1990; Sarlo 1991; Yúdice, Franco & Flores (1992). For a review of some of these works, see Montaldo 1991.

16. Six volumes of *Subaltern Studies* have been published by Oxford University Press (Delhi) under the general direction of Ranajit Guha. See also Guha and Spivak, eds. 1988; Guha 1983.

17. The distinction between arborescent and rhizomic forms is made by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

18. Examples of nomad sciences are, for instance, metallurgy (as opposed to material science or mechanical engineering), and alchemy (as opposed to chemistry, its "royal" counterpart). Philosophy and most other sciences are of the State type, although they may occasionally produce "nomad" forms (e.g., Nietzsche, Kleist).

19. On the notion of autopoiesis, see the work of the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1980, 1987). On the notion of self-organization, see Jantsch (1980), Prigogine and Stengers (1984). Piscitelli (1988) has also suggested the significance of autopoiesis for understanding social movements.

20. A similar notion guides a recent analysis of the struggle over language needs by Latinos (Flores and Yúdice 1990). It is in this terrain, these authors contend, that Latinos can be seen as constituting a social movement in the United States today.

21. The link between "needs" and ideologies of help and philantropy is explored by Gronemayer (1992). Here is a vignette from Gronemayer's article, which she quotes from Thoreau's *Walden*: "If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life...for fear that I should get some of his good done to me" (Thoreau 1977: 328; quoted in Gronemayer 1992: 53). The Alliance for Progress, aid and development as a whole are, of course, based on this ideology of "doing good" to others, the "needy" people of the Third World.

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