Social Movements and the Politicization of Chronic Poverty

Anthony Bebbington

ABSTRACT

Discussions of chronic poverty emphasize the extent to which poverty endures because of the social relationships and structures within which particular social groups are embedded. In this sense chronic poverty is a socio-political relationship rather than a condition of assetless-ness. Understood as such, processes of social mobilization become central to any discussion of chronic poverty because they are vehicles through which such relationships are argued over in society and potentially changed. This article explores the ways in which social movements, as one form of such mobilization, might affect chronic poverty. Four domains are discussed: influencing the underlying dynamics of the political economy of poverty; challenging dominant meanings of poverty in society; direct effects on the assets of the poor; and engaging with the state. The inherent fragilities of social movements limit these contributions, the most important of which is to destabilize taken-for-granted, hegemonic discourses on poverty and its reduction.

INTRODUCTION

Chronic poverty is a condition that resists change. For many authors, this persistence is explained by social and political relationships (Du Toit, 2004; Green and Hulme, 2005; Harriss-White, 2005; World Bank, 2006). These relationships structure patterns of discrimination, distributions of assets and opportunities, and the accepted wisdom about how society should be organized — distributions and discourses that have the effect of keeping significant numbers of people poor for long periods of time, often across generations (Green and Hulme, 2005). If this is so, conditions of chronic poverty are only likely to change when these relationships shift. This article explores one path

---

I am grateful to Sam Hickey, Diana Mitlin and Kees Biekart for particularly detailed readings of the paper and for many constructive comments. Two anonymous referees also provided very helpful guidance and feedback. Thanks also to the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) for financial support, and to an ESRC Professorial Research Fellowship (RES-051-27-0191) for further support to my time spent revising the paper. The Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales, Lima, Perú offered a warm and stimulating home while writing earlier versions, one of which appears as a CPRC Working Paper (Bebbington, 2006).

Development and Change 38(5): 793–818 (2007). © Institute of Social Studies 2007. Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main St., Malden, MA 02148, USA

through which such change might occur: the path of social mobilization led by social movements. It asks to what extent and in what ways social movements have contested the condition of chronic poverty and influenced the ways in which it is debated and acted upon.

Recent writing on chronic poverty has suggested that social movements and social mobilization might have an important role to play in its reduction. These claims, however, remain germinal. They do not elaborate the specific ways through which movements might have such effects, nor do they go beyond relatively generic notions of what social movements are and how they come to exist. Yet how one understands social movements has direct relevance for how one thinks of their potential relationship to chronic poverty reduction.

Given these antecedents, and following a brief reflection on the extent, nature and spatial variation of chronic poverty, the article begins by discussing points of contact between social movements and chronic poverty writing, suggesting that they share a similar potential to politicize the ways in which poverty is thought of. The section first outlines ways in which social movements have been invoked in chronic poverty writing; it then draws insights from social movement writings that help push forward a reflection on the ways in which movements might be relevant to chronic poverty debates, and on the ways in which the form and emergence of movements might be conceptualized. On this basis, the second section explores more specific pathways through which social movements might affect the dynamics of chronic poverty. Such pathways are identified in four domains: through movements' challenges to the institutions that underlie the political economy of chronic poverty; through their roles in reworking the cultural politics of poverty; through their direct effects on the assets of the poor; and through their engagements with the state. This last pathway is fraught with difficulties that can often cause internal fragilities within movements to explode. It therefore serves as the transition into a third section that discusses inherent weaknesses in movements and reasons for caution before celebrating any role that they might play in confronting chronic poverty.

The cases used to illustrate these arguments and the issues raised come from different parts of the world, North and South. Many, however, come from Latin America. The region's rich history of social mobilization (documented in Alvarez et al., 1998; Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Slater, 1985) make it a source of particularly interesting examples that have a far wider relevance beyond their geographical specificities.

CHRONIC POVERTY, THE PHENOMENON

According to the Chronic Poverty Report, some 300 to 420 million people live in chronic poverty (CPRC, 2004); '[t]hey and their children . . . will make up a large proportion of the roughly 721 million people projected to still be poor in 2015' (IBRD/WB, 2007: 65; Shepherd, 2007: 1). If this situation is to be reversed, three broad strategies are essential: 'livelihood security and social protection have to be prioritized alongside growth, material and human assets need to be redistributed so that the chronically poor can take up opportunities, and the difficult politics of challenging the processes which keep people poor must be addressed' (Shepherd, 2007: 2, citing the Chronic Poverty Report). The second and third of these strategies are, Shepherd suggests, still marginal to international (and many national) policy agendas. In large measure this article discusses one possible route through which they may become more visible in these agendas.

The term 'chronic poverty' is used both descriptively and analytically. It draws attention to the temporal dynamics of poverty — referring to those forms of absolute poverty[1] that are experienced for extended periods of time — while also illuminating a distinct set of factors that serve as 'drivers' and 'maintainers' of this poverty (CPRC, 2004). Such chronic poverty can take different forms (Shepherd, 2007: 4):

- long-term poverty experienced by an individual or household for such an extended period that it is unlikely to change
- life-course poverty experienced over the entire length of a person's life
- intergenerational poverty transmitted from parents to children through their experience of childhood, young adulthood and inheritance.

While such chronic poverty is a global phenomenon (South and North), its forms and intensity vary across international, national and sub-national scales. At a global scale, the Chronic Poverty Report estimates that the largest numbers of chronically poor people live in South Asia (135 to 190 million), while the 'highest incidence' of chronic poverty is to be found in 'sub-Saharan Africa, where 30–40% of all present day "US$1/day" poor people are trapped in poverty — an estimated 90 to 120 million people' (CPRC, 2004: v). Among other macro-regions, there are some 55 to 85 million chronically poor people in East Asia (mainly in China). While there are fewer chronically poor people in Latin America, certain regions 'stand out as persistently poor, such as the pan-Andean region, including parts of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia' (ibid.: 29).

These international differences might begin to suggest different causal factors underlying the persistence of chronic poverty. Thus, as just one comparison, while growth has clearly pushed chronic poverty incidence down in East Asia, in Latin America it has been less successful, suggesting that social structural and distributive factors are particularly important in sustaining chronic poverty there. In South Asia such structural factors also seem important (Harriss-White, 2005). Geographical variations within countries also suggest that different factors might play different roles depending on the context. 'Most national household survey data shows a significant regional dimension to the incidence of poverty', 'with concentrations in remote and low-potential rural areas, politically-marginalized regions and areas that are not well connected to markets, ports or urban centres' (CPRC, 2004: 26, v). This might also be taken as suggesting that the main cause is the absence of growth, and the absence of channels that relay such growth to certain regions. This, however, raises the question of *why* such channels are absent in the first place, and why it is that such regions come to be disadvantaged in infrastructural, public spending and other terms. The concentrations of chronic poverty in slum areas of cities close to 'growth poles' also suggest that factors other than the absence of growth are also important in creating and sustaining chronic poverty — factors that prevent these people from participating in or gaining access to the benefits of growth. Indeed, those most closely associated with the chronic poverty agenda suggest that growth *per se* will fail — or at least take a long time — to address such poverty, and that it is therefore vital to 'bring redistribution back onto the international agenda in updated and useful forms' and to build the (currently weak) political will necessary to sustain the types of policy necessary to break chronic poverty dynamics (Shepherd, 2007: 17).

---

[1] A person living in absolute poverty is unable to satisfy his/her minimum requirements for food, clothing or shelter (CPRC, 2004: 131).

CHRONIC POVERTY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: POLITICIZING POVERTY?

Social movements rarely emerge around poverty *per se*, and social movements of the chronically poor are even less frequent. The chronically poor are so asset deprived that to engage in organization, mobilization or political action demands time, social networks and material resources they do not have, and incurs risks they are unlikely to tolerate (Cleaver, 2005). Social movements do, however, emerge to contest social relationships and dynamics of capital accumulation that are implicated in the creation and reproduction of poverty. Indigenous movements, women's movements, Afro-Latino movements and landless people's movements are motivated and sustained by aspirations that derive from shared identities, and are directed against social relationships and structures that have adverse consequences for these identity groups. Other movements are directed against forms of capital accumulation which they deem noxious to human well-being: anti-globalization, environmental and fair trade movements are examples. Of course, identity-based movements can also contest patterns of accumulation (as for instance when Ecuadorian indigenous movements protest the signing of a Free Trade Treaty with the USA), and movements addressing accumulation can also assume an identity-based agenda (as when Peru's National Confederation of Mining Affected Communities, CONACAMI, assumes the mantle of an indigenous organization). However, the relative emphasis of movements varies — some are more directed towards challenging identity-based forms of discrimination, others attack the inequities created by the extraction, control and distribution of resources.

This difference of emphasis is similarly manifest in literature on the sources of chronic poverty. The adverse incorporation and social exclusion streams in this literature (see Hickey and Du Toit, 2007)[2] each suggest that deeply unequal social relationships — and dominant sets of ideas that surround and 'naturalize' those social relationships — are the main drivers and sustainers of extreme poverty. Meanwhile, the literature on economic development, in both its liberal (World Bank, 2001, 2006) and more radical (Harvey, 2003) forms, suggests that the relative persistence of extreme poverty reflects the forms that growth and market formation take.

The following paragraphs explore these points of contact between conceptions of chronic poverty and social movements. They first consider ways in which writing on chronic poverty has come to invoke social movements as important for the reduction of such poverty, and then the ways in which writing on social movements has explored their roles in poverty reduction. The latter also provides a basis for developing more finely grained conceptions of social movements within chronic poverty writing.

From Chronic Poverty to Social Movements

In those approaches to poverty that are primarily descriptive and definitional in orientation, poverty 'is seen as a lack of resources rather than an absence of entitlements, as an "economic" rather than a political problem' (Green and Hulme, 2005: 869). Therefore, Green and Hulme argue, it is imperative to develop concepts of poverty that incorporate within them an understanding of the causes of poverty. They suggest that the concept of chronic poverty lends itself to such an approach. Its focus on duration and dynamics makes explicit the role of social relations in producing poverty, as well as the extent to which those relationships are themselves embedded in political and economic institutions: 'Chronic poverty offers the potential to move the analytical focus of research from correlates of poverty to causes of poverty. By viewing poverty in dynamic terms it helps reveal the social and political processes that make people poor and keep them in poverty' (ibid.).

While Green and Hulme do not invoke social movements, their approach leads them to argue that at the very least people need to be empowered and mobilized: 'Poverty reduction does not simply require "good" policy: it requires creating the capacity of poorer people to influence, and hold accountable, those who make policies' (ibid.: 876). Or, in Kabeer's words as she reflects on poverty reduction in Bangladesh, 'the challenge for the future . . . lies in the field of politics as much as in the domain of policy . . . in creating the capacity of poorer and more vulnerable sections of society to influence those that make policies . . . and hold them accountable' (Kabeer, 2005: 41). Hickey and Bracking extend such reflections: 'Chronic poverty is an inherently political problem', they comment. 'Its persistence over time reflects its institutionalization within social and political norms and systems, its legitimation within political discourse and by political elites, and the failure of the poorest groups to gain political representation therein' (Hickey and Bracking, 2005: 851). As such 'politics and political change remain the key means by which such poverty can be challenged' (ibid.).

---

[2] Some argue that these streams are distinct, the social exclusion stream implying that the problem is lack of incorporation, and the adverse incorporation stream suggesting that the problem resides instead in prejudicial forms of incorporation (Du Toit, 2004).

Harriss-White (2005) pushes in a similar direction as she reflects on destitution. The destitute are exploited, denigrated and ignored, deemed less than citizens by others — all acts of power embodied in and exercised through social and political economic relationships that produce and reproduce destitution. These conditions will only change when destitute people are citizens in the full sense of the word and when elites begin to feel their own well-being is challenged by destitution itself — whether because these elites see the destitute as vectors of disease and other negative externalities, or because they fear the possibility of mobilization among the destitute and their allies. The potential role of social movements in challenging destitution is more than hinted at: 'Some politicized forms of social movement activity may be able to realize these and other pressing objectives for the destitute' (Harriss-White, 2005: 881, 889) and 'it becomes imperative to look to state and broader forms of civil society organization in order to identify the means by which destitute people can be represented' (ibid.: 887).

This said, few if any of these authors suggest that social movements are vehicles for addressing chronic poverty directly. Instead they view such movements as forms of political action that attack the social relationships underlying chronic poverty, thus increasing the likelihood that chronic poverty will be addressed by other actors. Reflecting the policy orientation of this literature, the tendency is to assume that the ways in which social movements will affect poverty pass through the state. That is, social movements will pressure governments to adopt new chronic poverty reduction policies, will partner the government to implement new programmes, and will hold government and these policies to account. This may be so. However, other literatures suggest that the main contributions of social movements will be in different domains. As we now discuss, much of the literature on social movements would suggest that their prime importance is not so much to change and be partners in state policies, but rather to change the ways in which society understands poverty in the first place. While in the chronic poverty literature, policy relevance is what gives movements their importance, in the social movement literature struggles over hegemony are what matters.

From Social Movements to Chronic Poverty: The Cultural Politics of Poverty

For the purposes of our argument here, social movement writing adds to the chronic poverty literature in two main ways. First, the chronic poverty literature says little specific about the emergence and structure of the movements it invokes. Social movement writing helps fill this gap and also illuminates certain points of contact between movements and poverty. Second, movement writing suggests rather different ways in which movements might affect the dynamics of chronic poverty.

The simple, but helpful, distinction between the 'demand' for social movements to emerge, and the 'supply' that produces them (Crossley, 2002; Melucci, 1985), is useful for reflecting on the links between poverty dynamics and movements. In particular, a reflection on the 'demand' side — the *why* of movement emergence — questions the extent to which movements are a result of poverty or chronic poverty. Habermas (1987), for instance, suggests that — in industrialized contexts — the *why* of movement emergence has much to do with the progressive colonization of everyday life and being, by the practices of modern capitalism and welfare statism. In this process, external institutions exercise progressively greater control over daily practices, and the market becomes present in previously personal domains of life, social interaction and culture. Habermas suggests that social movements emerge as efforts to defend, and recover, threatened forms of life and social organization (cf. Escobar, 1995: 222–6). Habermas also notes that the formal political system has less and less capacity to respond to these demands (a claim that seems equally pertinent for most developing countries), and that this fosters an increasing tendency towards forms of protest involving direct action and violence (Crossley, 2002: 162). While the types of colonization to which Habermas was alluding may be less relevant in the case of social movements in developing countries, the general idea remains useful. It is easy, for instance, to see how the everyday effects of neoliberalization and new forms of capital accumulation constitute palpable colonizations of people's lifeworlds. Likewise the tendency for direct and violent action in the face of limited state capacity is very real. 'Demand' for social movements can also come from a heightening sense of grievance around issues of identity and adverse social relationships (Escobar and Alvarez, 1992). Movements might emerge in response to increasing levels of inequality, abuse and coercion that derive from shifts in the structure of social relationships and capital accumulation. In turn, the presence and actions of movements might serve to rework these shifts.

The implication of these analyses is that movements are unlikely to emerge around poverty *per se* (though they may emerge around rapid *impoverishment*), and are more likely to emerge around economic and cultural phenomena that movements frame primarily in terms other than poverty. On the other hand, the very fact that movements emerge around issues that are drivers, rather than symptoms or immediate sources, of poverty, and that they address these issues through protest and political action, means that they have the effect of politicizing poverty, placing it within a broader demand for alternative, more socially just ways of organizing society (Escobar, 1995; Escobar and Alvarez, 1992). They make visible different ideas of development.

This aspect of the nature and work of social movements receives particular emphasis in post-structural analyses. These insist that culture — meanings, ideas, practices — constitutes one of the most important terrains in which social movements operate, and which they seek to change (Alvarez et al., 1998). Seen this way, social movements do not so much engage policy with counter-proposals. Instead, they contend the meanings of core ideas that underlie policy debates, challenge dominant notions about what counts as legitimate knowledge in the process of forming policy, and argue that alternative actors and alternative sources of knowledge ought also to influence policy-making processes (cf. Alvarez et al., 1998; Dagnino, 2007). Here, social movements are best understood as the vectors of particular discourses and forms of questioning the world.

How, though, do movements emerge in response to these colonizations, and how do they build and convey such counter-discourses? Crossley (2002: 93) argues that to a considerable degree movements emerge out of prior, everyday networks and practices. However, movement processes also require resources that everyday and informal networks are unable to mobilize. For this reason, even if movements are much more than organizations, they depend greatly on formal ‘social movement organizations’, or SMOs (Crossley, 2002; McCarthy and Zald, 1977) — NGOs, churches, student organizations, peasant associations, university programmes and so on. These organizations co-ordinate activities, gain access to resources, serve as public faces of movements, support events, nurture leaders during periods of slack movement activity, and more generally help produce ‘Melucci’s submerged networks or latent social movements’ (Townsend et al., 2004: 871).

Such organizations also play important roles in forming and projecting movement discourses. They conduct research, finance and produce publications, attend events and more generally have the capacities that help them engage in public debate. In a very practical sense, they house the resources that buy the time needed to formalize and organize arguments, to build their internal and external coherence and to project them publicly. As a result, such organizations tend to be the sources of counter-discourses and the generative ideas on which they are built (and it is for this reason that such organizations are often intimidated by dominant powers). Indeed, just as movements are not immaculately conceived, nor are their discourses, and SMOs play a vital role in this process. That said, within a given movement, different SMOs may have distinct ideas of how movement discourse should evolve and can end up pulling a movement in somewhat different directions (cf. McCarthy and Zald, 1977) in much the same way as chronic poverty writers have not been able to agree on whether ‘social exclusion’ or ‘adverse incorporation’ constitutes the better concept for talking about the ways in which social relationships underlie poverty.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND PATHWAYS OUT OF CHRONIC POVERTY

While networks and organizations are part of, and play important roles within, social movements, these movements are more than this. For some commentators (such as Tilly, 1985), movements are best understood as political campaigns rather than as particular types of organizations. In a similar vein, for the South African case, Ballard et al. (2005: 617) view social movements as 'politically and/or socially directed collectives' of usually several networks and organizations which aim to change elements of the political, economic and social system. Following this same line, we take social movements to be processes of collective action, dispersed but also sustained across space and time, and involving actors in a range of locations and often operating at different scales (Tsing, 2004). While these actors do not need to share exactly the same visions either of the reasons for protest or of the alternatives being sought, there does need to be a significant overlap among these visions in order to sustain the movement and give it coherence. This section explores four domains in which movements affect poverty and are relevant to chronic poverty agendas.

Social Movements and the Underlying Dynamics of Political Economy

Movements, Accumulation and Adverse Incorporation

Du Toit (2004) has argued that, rather than use the concept of social exclusion to discuss chronic poverty in South Africa, it is analytically more correct to frame it in terms of 'adverse incorporation'. He argues that chronic poverty flows less from exclusionary forces that hold certain groups at the margins of society and economy and rather more from the relationships through which these groups are integrated into wider economic and social networks. In some cases, these terms of incorporation assign low value and returns to the resources of such groups, thus consigning them to continued poverty; in other (fewer) circumstances they may assign high value to these resources and so foster processes of dispossession, as these resources become incorporated into the circuits of capital and taken away from (or, in the case of extractive industries, from under the feet of) poor people. These observations are the flip side of Harvey's (2003) two types of accumulation: accumulation by exploitation and accumulation by dispossession. They draw attention to the ways in which people become, or stay, poor because of the ways in which they and their assets are incorporated into the dynamics of accumulation. There is also a link here to Habermas's notion that movements emerge in response to ways in which lifeworlds are colonized — to the extent that such systemic dynamics of accumulation may often be experienced locally as disruptions of everyday life and livelihood.

Many forms of mobilization and social movement have emerged to challenge processes of accumulation that occur both by exploitation and by dispossession. In rural Latin America, two significant and frequent contexts in which this has recently occurred have been trade liberalization and new forms of natural resource extraction. Trade liberalization — which we can understand, in Du Toit's terms, as redefining the terms of rural people's incorporation into wider economic networks — is feared by many rural producers as a new form of exploitation that will push down the value of their products and thus the returns to their factors of production. Regardless of the technical arguments as to the final effects of trade liberalization on poverty, movements have emerged because they perceive that there will be an adverse effect on livelihoods. Typically these movements bring together peasant and producer organizations, NGOs, research centres, transnational activists as well as a range of other national and international SMOs. Edelman (1999) has charted the emergence of such movements of 'peasants against globalization' in Central America. While his earlier writings suggested these movements were having some influence on liberalization processes (Edelman, 1998, 1999) his later interventions are more cautious, noting an apparent demise in the movements and suggesting that, with the signing of the Central American Free Trade Agreement, their overall effects will not have been great (Edelman, 2003, 2006).

A distinct, but related set of mobilizations has emerged around natural resource extraction and governance. Examples here include Bolivia's so-called 'water wars' (2000, and then again in 2004), and 'gas war'; the waves of localized mobilizations of communities affected by mining in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and increasingly Central America (Bebbington, 2007); the emergence of transnational networks and initiatives supporting these national movements around minerals and water; and the same mixture of localized protests and transnational alliances around hydrocarbon extraction, again in Bolivia and in Ecuador. These movements seem better understood as responses to accumulation through dispossession — at the very least, many of the actors involved perceive that the processes against which they are mobilizing are ones of dispossession.

In such contexts, movements and movement organizations emerge in response to forms of colonization of the lifeworld that are driven by patterns and practices of large-scale capital accumulation and result in dispossession at a local and regional level. Typically these movements argue that such forms of extraction and resource governance do little to reduce poverty. Some argue that they actually deepen poverty through resource dispossession and the environmental and social damage visited on the resources of poor people living in the vicinity of these activities (Bebbington et al., 2007).

Notably, the areas in which such resource extraction occurs are often already characterized by deep and chronic poverty. Again, this suggests that chronic poverty *per se* does not lead to movement emergence but that, within such environments, movements *can* emerge when forms of colonization and dispossession lead to new forms of impoverishment among the already poor, accompanied by quite palpable forms of accumulation on the part of these new forms of capital. Furthermore, in the context of such unequal distribution of benefits and costs, these movements seem more likely to engage in direct and violent confrontation. One possible, simple, explanation for this propensity for direct action is that the objects of their protest — company offices, mine sites — are more physically identifiable than the more relational issues being addressed by identity-based movements.

While we might approach the emergence of movements in similar ways, it is important to keep in mind that there is considerable diversity both among them, and within them. In particular, different actors within movements frequently offer distinct critiques of the issues that they are addressing, and different proposals for alternative policies (Perreault, 2006). These alternatives can range from complete rejection of trade liberalization and new modes of resource governance, through to demands for greater participation in decision making regarding these policy domains and more equitable distribution of the economic benefits that they might generate. Some SMOs prefer strategies of negotiation,[3] others of confrontation and direct action, and so on. Often, however, they seek new ways of coupling debates on liberalization and resource extraction with debates on poverty and alternative strategies for linking growth and poverty reduction (Perreault, 2006).

In these different cases, the debates that give rise to the emergence of social movements are highly politicized. One of the arguments on which divisions are deep is precisely that regarding the effects of such forms of liberalization and resource governance on poverty. Governments and substantial parts of the business community argue that these policies are essential for poverty reduction, while movements emerge around the opposite conviction, namely that these processes are having no effects on poverty and may be aggravating it. This complicates public policy engagement with these movements, while at the same time meaning that any legitimate dialogue on chronic poverty reduction has to include them.

Movements and the Challenge to Exclusion

While some movements can best be understood as responses to forms of accumulation and lifeworld colonization, others are perhaps better understood as responses to social structures and institutions that serve to exclude groups from certain domains of political and economic life. Of particular relevance here are those identity-based, gender, place, ethnic and racial movements that have been analysed by the 'new social movements' literature. Here, by means of example, and because of their particular significance in rural areas, we focus on ethnic movements.

---

[3] Read by some as selling out and co-optation.

Ethnic movements can be understood as challenging the 'terms of recognition' (Appadurai, 2004; Lucero, 2006) under which certain identity-based groups are subject to disadvantage as a consequence of the ways in which they are viewed and governed by other, more powerful groups. In Latin America and elsewhere, church-based, non-governmental, educational and other organizations have worked with ethnically subordinated groups to lay the bases for organizational and leadership capacities that might 'fight back' against these adverse terms of recognition. Over a thirty-year period in countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru, this process helped support the emergence of new organizations. In earlier years these organizations were primarily place and regionally based, but with time macro-regional and national organizations have also emerged.

While poverty has been a concern of these organizations and movements, their discourses have revolved far more around recognition, access and the legal and constitutional foundations of ethnic rights and relationships. 'Indigenous movement ideology has operated around a principle of self-determination that seeks autonomy, access, and participation in social and political life', and movements 'outline specific practices and aspects of those cultures, and they affirm group "rights to have rights"' (Andolina, 2003: 727, 749). As such, these discourses and practices have also revolved around the building of new types of state and state–society relationship. Indeed, in both Ecuador and now Bolivia, these movements — through strategic alliances with political parties — have spent periods within government (though not always with felicitous outcomes). At the same time, the movements have played an important role in creating new public or 'counter-public' (Andolina, 2003: 733) spaces in which novel debates on development and democracy have occurred.

The effects of this in political and public life have been many. On the one hand, mechanisms have been put in place through which (akin to the Porto Alegre model), indigenous citizens are better able to rework and monitor existing forms of government through the creation of people's assemblies that shadow local governments. In Andolina's words (2003: 723):

> People's assemblies in Ecuador are emblematic of political struggles world-wide, where 'sovereigns' and their delegates are 'shadowed' by alternative (if sometimes makeshift) institutions . . . Social movements, therefore, influence democratization not only by expanding understandings of democracy, but also by weaving new meanings into existing or alternative political institutions, so as to bridge the gaps 'between substance and procedures of democracy.'

At the same time, they have helped change the terms of national and local debates on development, as well the terms on which indigenous groups are recognized in Ecuador, as reflected both in public opinion[4] and in the national constitution. Thus, Andolina argues that 'the Ecuadorean indigenous movement influenced the new constitution through cultural struggles over the meanings of political institutions, concepts, and actions' (Andolina, 2003: 722). Indeed, one of the 'successes' of the indigenous movement in Ecuador was to influence the new constitution of 1998 so that it included a chapter on indigenous collective rights 'that are unprecedented in their collective character'. These rights included: 'communal land, indigenous (and Afro-Ecuadorean) territorial "circumscriptions", development with identity managed by indigenous people, education in indigenous languages, indigenous judicial and health practices, representation in all government bodies, participation in resource use decisions, environmental preservation in indigenous lands and collective intellectual property rights' (Andolina, 2003: 747–8).

The Ecuador case is thus one in which movements have influenced interethnic relationships and the relative standing and power of indigenous people. The implications for chronic poverty appear clear. Movements have created public debate on, and fostered constitutional change around, some of the relational and structural causes of chronic poverty. Yet at the same time, it remains the case that in the two municipalities in which indigenous organizations have had most success in reworking local governance and power relationships, indigenous poverty as measured in more standard income and food consumption terms remains chronic (Ospina et al., 2006). The implication is that, while reducing exclusion may affect non-material dimensions of poverty, material indicators may remain relatively unchanged. This takes us back to Du Toit's (2004) insistence on speaking of adverse incorporation rather than social exclusion, for the case suggests that even if movements succeed in addressing the conditions of exclusion, they may have little effect on the conditions of adverse incorporation; as a result, material poverty persists in its chronicity.

Social Movements and the Cultural Politics of Chronic Poverty

Important bodies of literature on social movements and civil society have suggested that one of the most important effects of social movements — and indeed one of the reasons that they emerge — is to challenge hegemonic ideas in society and to make publicly debatable and debated, themes that were previously taken for granted. Two strands in the literature are especially relevant in this regard and though they map back onto distinct bodies of theory, they are each helpful for teasing out links between chronic poverty and movements.

---

[4] By 1999, the national indigenous confederation, CONAIE, was ranked as the third most publicly trusted institution after the church and the military (Andolina, 2003; Lucero, 2006).

One strand of literature traces its roots to post-structuralist approaches interested in the effects of discourse on society (Alvarez et al., 1998; Escobar, 1992, 1995; Escobar and Alvarez, 1992). This work is concerned to show how knowledge, and ways of framing relationships and 'problems' (or non-problems) in society have material effects on social processes, policy definition, and on what is written into or silently written out of policy possibilities. Simple examples for our purposes would be the effects on policy of those discourses that frame poverty primarily in terms of missing assets, vulnerability, or the geographical disadvantages of the places in which poor people reside. The argument would be that such discourses write out redistributive, anti-racist and positive discrimination measures from potential poverty reduction policy. They also create a discursive environment in which social protection, migration enhancing, infrastructure and other targeted interventions are much more likely to be deemed 'sensible'.

Slightly more complex are those arguments that say that poverty reduction strategies are at once circumscribed and structured by dominant ideas about the nature and acceptability of poverty. Green and Hulme (2005: 872) thus suggest that '[t]he question becomes not why are some people poor in society, but why some societies tolerate poverty as an outcome and for whom, and how this toleration becomes embedded within institutional norms and systems'. Likewise, dominant ideas about acceptable, normal, natural social relationships have profound implications for poverty: the gendering of poverty, for instance, 'is due to the ways in which adult female personhood is constituted as depending on a male spouse for access to various kinds of rights, including those over what is constituted as "property"' (ibid.: 870).

One of the most important contributions of social movements is that they destabilize these norms and taken-for-granted meanings (Alvarez et al., 1998). They challenge ideologies surrounding poverty debates. At the same time — and here a different tradition in movement writing is helpful — they can help create public spheres in which issues linked to poverty become the subject of debates in which a broad range of actors can participate. Indeed, part of the process of creating public spheres is to create spaces and avenues for new (historically marginalized) actors to participate in debates on poverty and development policy from which they have historically been excluded. The vehicles here are many: movement activity and SMOs might help move issues into the popular press; they might produce publications that become broadly available and foster discussion; they may create new spaces of their own in which debates occur. Once such debates begin, hidden sources of chronic poverty might be made more visible, and so become subject to policy intervention. As just one example, it is reasonable to argue that in countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia and Guatemala, the combination of increased indigenous people's organization and mobilization and a concerted effort on the part of certain researchers (who might therefore be considered part of the indigenous rights movement, if not its organizations), has helped make the multiple links between ethnicity and poverty visible and debated in ways that were not the case twenty years ago. In the same way, the mobilization of these same organizations during 2006, coupled with earlier efforts by the organizations and a number of NGOs, turned the signing of a free trade treaty between Ecuador and the USA into a public debate on the links between trade liberalization treaties and poverty.

Social Movements and the Assets of the Chronically Poor

While this article has suggested that movements rarely emerge in order to have a direct impact on the assets of the poor, a significant qualifier is in order, for movements *have* been important in enhancing access to land, to shelter (Mitlin, 2006) and increasingly to water (Perreault, 2006). In Latin America, for instance, land conflicts mark the origin of more concerted forms of rural social mobilization. Furthermore, although it seemed during the 1980s that rural social mobilization, such as it was, was becoming less an issue of land and more one of territory, ethnicity and economic justice, over the last decade land has once again become an important base for new forms of mobilization of landless people. This has been most clearly and popularly true in the case of the MST, the Landless People's Movement in Brazil (Kay, 2004; Wolford, 2004a), but with the relative success and visibility of the MST in Brazil, seeds of landless movements have begun to emerge elsewhere in the region.

The mobilization for land has typically emerged in contexts of skewed land distributions and (in the past) tied labour arrangements linked to these distributions. Mobilizations sought to challenge both labour and land arrangements, but generally did so by seeking to occupy and take control of land. In this sense, these were strategies that sought direct access to assets. To the extent that these occupations became movements, and they began to occur across different locations throughout a country, they called into question the social relationships that produced such skewed agrarian structures and in many instances induced governments and modernizing national elites to pass land reform policies that formalized this questioning of particular relations of land ownership. In the struggle for ideas over land, such movements challenged dominant meanings of land, upsetting assumptions about acceptable agrarian structures in a way that ultimately led to land reforms and the profound social changes these helped usher in. While many land reforms did not progress very far, they did address some of the labour and land relationships most egregiously linked to the production of chronic poverty (de Janvry, 1981).

Something similar appears to be occurring with the new landless movements in that — with obvious exceptions — they tend to be directed at the most severe distributions that leave sectors of the population completely landless and chronically poor.[5] In a context of acute inequality in the ownership of land, the MST has more than half a million members, and has led over 1500 invasions of large estates, demanding that they be expropriated (Kay, 2004). Since it was founded in 1984, it has carried out some 230,000 land occupations and helped establish over 1300 rural land-reform settlements with some 350,000 families benefiting (Kay, 2004; Wolford, 2004a: 412). It has expanded its base from three to twenty-eight states, and '[f]or the first time in Brazilian history, a social movement has organized a coherent membership base in each of the country's highly differentiated geographic regions' (Wolford, 2004a: 412). Not only has the scale of MST's operation pushed government to move on expropriations more quickly than would otherwise have been the case (Kay, 2004), it has changed the meanings of land and landlessness in, and beyond, Brazil.

---

[5] Even if, as Wolford has pointed out, their members are by no means all landless.

Of course, the MST does not only benefit the chronically poor. Members and beneficiaries of land occupations include middle-sized farmers, as well as landless rural workers (Wolford, 2004a). Furthermore, not all poor rural people have wanted to be members of the MST (Wolford, 2004a, 2004b), nor have they always sustained their participation over time. Wolford argues that this is largely because the way in which the MST understands land and its significance has an uneven resonance among different parts of the rural population, with former rural workers having quite different ideas of the importance of land than peasant producers. All this notwithstanding, deeply poor rural families have benefited from the existence of the MST. Wolford (2004a, 2004b) talks, for instance, of the ways in which involvement in the MST helped rural workers in the northeast of Brazil — suffering because of the collapse of the sugarcane economy — gain access to land. Even if these same workers (now small-scale producers) reverted to cane cultivation when the industry picked up again, their involvement in the MST helped them survive a period of agrarian crisis.

The MST has not yet been able to put serious land reform policy on the agenda in Brazil, largely — says Foweraker (2001) — because during its early years, and in spite of broader alliances with workers' unions, it was not able to get the issue into the drafting of the constitution in 1988. Yet at the same time that these landless movements have had most success in facilitating access to land and other assets, they have done so in a way that simultaneously calls into question social structures and land tenure institutions. As such they address assets directly while also challenging institutions governing land access and the societal ideas legitimating these institutions. Indeed, this hybrid nature may be important to their success because the possibility of access to assets can serve, in the immediate term, to attract otherwise ambivalent people to the movement (Wolford, 2004b). As the movement then becomes more visible, precisely because its active members grow in number, its arguments about institutions and land tenure gain further credence.

Social Movements and the State

Talking about the industrial northwest of England in an earlier era, Green and Hulme (2005: 876) argue that 'state action as much as economic growth eliminated extreme poverty and chronic vulnerability through the establishment of a welfare system ensuring that the jobless could meet their basic needs and pay their rent. This put an end to industrial destitution (Roberts, 1984), and constituted a political statement concerning the unacceptability of poverty that shaped political discourse for decades'. Even if social movement arguments are directed at society and culture, it is difficult get away from the state. Whether the goal is to challenge constitutions, land laws, mining regulations, or free trade deals, these can only be formally changed through the state. Yet if there was just one word to describe movement attitudes to the state it would be 'ambivalence', with movements viewing the state as simultaneously source and solution of exclusion, poverty and inequity. Movements are continually troubled by debates on whether and how to engage the state, often culminating in internal arguments and divisions (Mitlin, 2006). This theme recurs across the literature — from discussions of civil rights movements and poverty programmes in the US South (Andrews, 2001), to indigenous movements in Ecuador and Bolivia (Lucero, 2006), social movements in South Africa (Ballard et al., 2005) and urban movements in India (MacFarlane, 2004). '[S]ocial movements' engagements with the state fall on a continuum between in-system collaborative interactions on the one extreme and out-of-system adversarial relations on the other' (Ballard et al., 2005: 629); where they fall on this continuum varies from movement to movement, and within a given movement over time.

Some of these different views reflect cultural and political differences among distinct SMOs within movements. Lucero notes that within CONAIE (Ecuador's umbrella confederation of indigenous peoples), 'there is disagreement over the right mix of contestation and negotiation as lowland groups are often seen as more "*gobiernista*" (pro-government) and willing to go to the negotiating table when highland actors are more likely to take to the streets ... the same tension exists in Bolivia' (Lucero, 2006: 16). But the different strategies also reflect particular responses to the political moment: the transition to democracy in South Africa, for instance, created more spaces for negotiation (Ballard et al., 2005). In such changes of context, it is not surprising to see movements engaging in more dialogue and less direct action.

Authors (like movements themselves) differ on the appropriateness and effectiveness of different strategies. Discussing social movements' effects on poverty programmes in the US South of the 1960s, Andrews (2001) concludes that movements were most effective when they built different organizations that among them allowed an oscillation between outright protest on the one hand and negotiation on the other, depending on the political moment. The threat of the movement led white politicians to embrace war-on-poverty programmes to which they were initially opposed. Subsequently, through carving out, participating in and controlling administrative spaces within these programmes, movements had a positive influence on the amount of funding made available. In other cases, direct action seems to be the only strategy that delivers. A comparative study of environmental movements and mining in Peru and Ecuador argues that mining companies have only really shifted their approaches to mineral development and community relations in response to direct action. While not all forms of direct action elicit response, some do: those whose resonance can be amplified internationally through the transnational networks in which movements are embedded; those that complicate ongoing natural resource extraction; and those that catch companies completely by surprise (Bebbington et al., 2007).

In a different context — the slum dwellers' movement in India — MacFarlane (2004: 910) takes a different tack, and concludes that conciliatory, negotiating approaches are far more effective than direct protest. He describes the approach of a movement that:

> is not striving to radically change the long-term politics of private and state interests, though it is radically attempting to renegotiate the relations of power between these bodies and the poor. . . . The Alliance is challenging the terms of engagement with authorities, but not the control over urban planning and development that these authorities have . . . and is beginning to make substantial gains in Mumbai for the poor. (ibid.: 911)

This, MacFarlane concludes, is a more plausible strategy for reducing poverty than oppositional approaches.

But such reformist, conciliatory, negotiating approaches can have their costs. Reflecting in particular on the cases of Chile and Brazil, Foweraker (2001) argues that the move towards negotiation and conciliation under conditions of neoliberal democracy has led to the taming of social movements. In some instances, livelihood crises triggered by neoliberalism have led movements that initially emerged demanding justice and citizenship to ask for specific hand-outs and programmes to help the poor cope with crisis. In others, Foweraker argues, the very act of negotiation leads movements and movement organizations to 'lose their edge as defenders of the excluded and impoverished' (ibid.: 861) and become negotiators for, and at times implementers of, specific programmes. Furthermore, as states learn, they appear to anticipate, rather than respond to, grassroots demands and build bureaucratic rules about how to access resources. Negotiating these rules has the effect of further demobilizing movements (ibid.: 863). 'This', he says, 'does not mean that social movements and NGOs cannot achieve some positive impact on social policy or institutional reform, but it does indicate that their impact is unlikely to be fundamental' (ibid.: 841). Movements — and particularly movement organizations — end up doing reasonably well in facilitating access to benefits, but they fail to influence institutions and structures.

CAVEATS ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CHRONIC POVERTY

Writing on social movements is often normative, with a related tendency to celebrate both the potential of movements to transform society and the role that they play in making the political dimensions of development more visible. Yet movements suffer many constraints. Two are discussed here: the weak representation of the poorest within movements, and the difficulties involved in sustaining coherence and alliance among multiple actors within movements.

Problems of representation and internal democracy within movements are particularly relevant for the argument here. One evident problem is the extent to which movements capture the concerns and interests of the poorest. In this sense movements suffer the same problem as other organizations: namely that the poor, and especially the very poor, lack the time and resources to participate, and the capacities to make their voices heard in the debates and arguments that lead to the formation of movement discourses. Two studies of the widely celebrated Bolivian movement that contested the privatization of Cochabamba's water supply system and ultimately led to the withdrawal of the concessionaire, each refer to ways in which certain interests were squeezed out of the main platforms of the movement.

> In the water war, irrigators consolidated their influence, but as Laurie, Andolina and Radcliffe (2002) observe, they did so in a way that largely obscured the needs of Cochabamba's urban migrant population, which has only precarious access to water and shares in few of the collective political and social benefits enjoyed by more organized sectors such as irrigators, miners, or factory workers. (Perreault, 2006: 166)

In a quite different context — South Asia and the destitute — Harriss-White (2005) expresses a similar set of concerns. The destitute have few allies, she suggests, and 'there are very rarely more than ad hoc links between destitute people and other kinds of oppressed people or those who for other reasons are unable to earn wages covering their daily maintenance and generational reproduction. There is no general solidarity on the part of the latter for the former' (Harriss-White, 2005: 887), complicating greatly the possibility that a broader movement might emerge. The exclusion of the very poorest may, Hickey and Bracking (2005: 861) suggest, be a more general characteristic of movements. It may therefore be that a special role of SMOs is to press for greater attention to the voices and concerns of the chronically poor within movements.

Also, movement members may have a range of concerns that is too wide for the movement to be able to address all of them; indeed, movement leaders and organic intellectuals may not even perceive some of these concerns. Wolford (2004b) suggests that while the MST's view of the relationship between land, rural social change and development resonates with some of the rural poor, it has had less resonance with those who had previously been rural proletarians.

As a result, its bases are stronger in some regions, and with some groups of the rural poor, than others. The difficulty that rural movements face in responding to divergent needs of their bases is an old chestnut (see, for example, Bebbington, 1996). It is also a source of weakness, because it is always possible for their opponents to say (with some justification) that they are not representative of particularly poor social sectors.

The difficulty of sustaining coherence and convergence among actors whose interests overlap but are not identical has already been noted in the context of movement relationships with the state. Two tensions seem especially important: those over strategy, and those over discourse. The tensions that emerge within movements over whether and how to engage with the state reflect the not uncommon situation in which movement actors have a relatively similar view on the issue and grievance that holds them together, but have quite different views on strategy, on how to pursue their concerns. Differences emerge regarding whether and how to engage the state, or market actors, whether and how to engage in confrontational and direct action, when to negotiate and when to fight. These differences can be particular sources of fragility when movements become involved in poverty debates in which the argument is frequently made (by ostensible enemies as well as by allies) that poverty is so serious and chronic that movements should put their purism to one side and just '*do something*'. This argument inevitably resonates with some movement actors — perhaps especially those who have already suffered because of prior, more confrontational tactics; slowly differences of viewpoint on strategy become wider and deeper and the movement unravels.

Differences on discourse can likewise generate tensions within movements, in particular among those SMOs that, often by default, assume the role of producing, refining and relaying movement discourses. Differences among SMOs and other movement sub-groups on how to conceptualize those social relations that the movement is attacking, on how to frame alternatives, on how to talk of poverty — all of these can elicit tensions and 'noise' in the messages emerging from movements. These differences are then often cultivated by actors external to the movement who have an interest in seeing one discourse become dominant, or simply in weakening the movement. Funding agencies, oil companies, and mining companies can and have each played this role. In the absence of strong and legitimate leadership, offsetting the centrifugal tendencies that this can ignite becomes extremely difficult. This weakens the movement as well as its potential to influence the dynamics of chronic poverty.

CONCLUSIONS: MOVEMENTS, CHRONIC POVERTY AND THE STRUGGLE OVER IDEAS

Some discussions of chronic poverty emphasize that poverty is chronic because of the social relationships and structures within which particular groups of the poor are embedded. In this sense chronic poverty is a socio-political relationship rather than a condition of assetless-ness. Understood as such, the work of social movements is of acute importance to any discussion of chronic poverty because they are vehicles through which such relationships are argued over in society and potentially changed.

Movements rarely work directly on poverty, nor do they emerge simply because poverty exists. Instead, they emerge in response to 'demands' created by the colonization of people's everyday lifeworlds by new forms of accumulation, or by the deepening of actual or perceived inequities among social groups. In response to these demands, movements challenge existing social and political economic arrangements, one of whose effects is to produce and sustain poverty. Their terrain of action is therefore political: challenging ideas, assumptions, dominant practices and stereotypes. Movements are about contention (McAdam et al., 2001), politicizing discussions of development and society. Their existence and strategies emphasize what chronic poverty authors have also tried to say: that the drivers of such poverty are primarily socio-political, and that chronic poverty must be understood primarily as a product of adverse incorporation and social exclusion. The work of many such movements can be understood as targeting these relationships of exclusion and incorporation.

At a time when arguments about development and poverty become ever more streamlined, by the combined hegemony of neoliberal thought and poverty reduction targets (most clearly embodied in the Millennium Development Goals), perhaps the most important role of social movements in addressing chronic poverty is that of destabilizing dominant, taken-for-granted ideas about poverty and the reasons why it is so chronic. In Latin America this has already been a long struggle for those SMOs (mostly NGOs) who have argued that the issue is not poverty but rather inequality. Arguably these organizations have had relatively little effect on poverty debates precisely because of their distance from broader social movements. Conversely, indigenous movements in Ecuador and Bolivia have been far more successful in shifting ideas about race, discrimination and rights and have changed not just the institutional face of development politics in their countries but also the languages within which development and poverty can be talked about.

Victories in these wars over ideas about poverty are only ever temporary. The inherent fragilities of social movements help explain why counter-hegemonic ideas might rise, and then fall, ceding ground once again to old accepted notions. Counter-discourses need not only counter-public spaces (Andolina, 2003); they also need actors to keep them present in public debates, and to continue giving them legitimacy. When movements enter into demise, the counter-discourses that they had fashioned and projected quickly follow. Likewise when allies cease to provide the financial and technical support that movements need in order to continue refining, adapting and updating their counter-discourses, then again the ideas can quickly lose both power and legitimacy in the public realm. And finally, when actors — ostensible allies or not — seek to domesticate movements, urging them to sit at tables for dialogue, the risk again is that their counter-discourses will lose weight. The moment movements are no longer feared, their ability to affect change in the terms of public debate is also reduced.

It is perhaps in the face of this recognition of the risks of being incorporated and domesticated that some movements opt for autonomous strategies that involve sustained opposition to and criticism of the state, rather than direct engagement. Such strategies can take various forms, combining, to different degrees, activities that aim to address poverty directly through asset building with activities that are far more discursive in nature and which aim to challenge hegemonic ideas in society. The Zapatistas in Chiapas might constitute a relatively extreme example of such autonomous strategies,[6] in that they engage in, foster and govern a range of activities in particular autonomous spaces within which the state is scarcely present. Indeed, the case of the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional — Zapatista National Liberation Army) suggests that such a strategy can affect chronic poverty dynamics (without having to engage the state directly), above all by shifting the nature of public debate in Mexico. It is inevitable that less is known about the material effects of the EZLN's actions on poverty, with different commentators having distinct views on this. However, historically we do know that strategies that do not engage the state *have* affected the material dimensions of poverty. That said, in some instances it has been their very success in affecting the materiality of poverty that has subsequently brought them to engage with the state in the desire to scale-up such effects. Indeed, it may be that while engagement is not a pre-requisite for movements to have an influence on poverty, it is almost always a pre-requisite for them to take this influence to scale (Bebbington and McCourt, 2007).

All of the foregoing has, implicitly, presumed the existence of social movements. However, in many cases such movements do not exist, or are at best germinal and chronically weak. If movements are so important to processes that engage the socio-political dimensions of chronic poverty, the question then arises as to whether these dimensions can be addressed in the absence of such movements. The answer must be yes. Public intellectuals — whether academics, religious figures or other commentators — continue to play critical roles in drawing attention to and generating analytical knowledge of these socio-political dimensions of poverty. Likewise, enlightened politicians and officials have developed policy and legislation (for instance around discrimination) that target these socio-political drivers and sustainers of poverty. Nevertheless, the literature on state–society synergy (Evans, 1996; Fox, 1996) continues to suggest that the success and effectiveness of such reform initiatives are the greater when they are pursued in some form of concert with social movement organizations and processes of social mobilization.

---

[6] This point was suggested by one referee.

In their absence, then, can the emergence of such movements be induced? Again the answer must surely be a qualified yes. Those movements that currently exist were neither spontaneously generated nor immaculately conceived (Carroll, 1992). They were cultivated by leaders and distinct types of social movement organization (religious, non-governmental or other). In the short and medium term, such organizations and leaders often act both as cultivators of incipient movements ('tending the grassroots' as Carroll, 1992, so eloquently put it) and as voices, representing poor, excluded and other disadvantaged groups while a broader movement is still emerging. This has been a legitimate way to act, as well as an effective one. Such movement organizations and public intellectuals have helped politicize poverty debates, and have helped advance processes that target the structural bases of poverty. However, such ways of acting always ultimately confront obstacles. Indeed, the very success of such movement organizations in politicizing poverty debates consistently leads elites to fight back, arguing that the organizations speak only for themselves and are in no way representative of a broader constituency. However unfair such criticisms may be, they equally consistently leave their mark and slowly erode the legitimacy of movement organizations, leaders and intellectuals. In such a context, the only way in which the legitimacy of organizations and intellectuals, and thus the political force of their arguments, can be protected is through their becoming embedded within broader movements that not only 'house' them, but also welcome them.[7] In this sense, as time unfolds, non-governmental and related organizations need social movements as much as social movements require the support and expertise of movement organizations.

James Ferguson (1990) coined the term 'the anti-politics machine' to refer to the sprawling bureaucratic apparatus that serves to take the politics out of debates on development, a machine that has been equally well at work in poverty debates. The implication of his argument is that discourses are not immaculately conceived. They are produced, reworked, projected into public and private spheres and then held there, partly by the force of their own internal coherence, partly by the same actors that constitute the machine that produced them. If chronic poverty is to become a concept that helps politicize poverty debates, then we might, playing on Ferguson, also talk of the importance of a 'politics machine' — one that produces politicizing discourses on poverty and holds open the possibility of shifting the contours of popular and policy debates on its reduction. Social movements, for all their internal fragilities, constitute a very significant part of that machine. Chronic poverty researchers provide a modest part of the raw material that it needs.

---

[7] This is not an idle point, for many movements — perhaps particularly indigenous movements — have often turned against and criticized NGOs, religious organizations and public intellectuals on the grounds that they have assumed too much visibility and autonomy.

REFERENCES

Alvarez, S., E. Dagnino and A. Escobar (eds) (1998) *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures. Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Andolina, R. (2003) 'The Sovereign and its Shadow: Constituent Assembly and Indigenous Movement in Ecuador', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35(4): 721–50.

Andrews, K. (2001) 'Social Movements and Policy Implementation: The Mississippi Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty, 1965–1971', *American Sociological Review* 66(1): 71–95.

Appadurai, A. (2004) 'The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition', in V. Rao and M. Walton (eds) *Culture and Public Action: A Cross-disciplinary Dialogue on Development Policy*, pp. 59–84. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Ballard, R., A. Habib, I. Valodia and L. Zuern (2005) 'Globalization, Marginalization and Contemporary Social Movements in South Africa', *African Affairs* 104/417: 615–34.

Bebbington, A. (1996) 'Organizations and Intensifications: Small Farmer Federations, Rural Livelihoods and Agricultural Technology in the Andes and Amazonia', *World Development* 24(7): 1161–78

Bebbington, A. (2006) 'Social Movements and the Politicization of Chronic Poverty Policy'. CPRC Working Paper No 63. Manchester and London: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

Bebbington, A. (ed.) (2007) *Minería, movimientos sociales y respuestas campesinas: una ecología política de transformaciones territoriales* (*Mining, Social Movements and Peasant Responses: A Political Ecology of Territorial Transformation*). Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

Bebbington, A. and W. McCourt (eds) (2007) *Development Success: Statecraft in the South*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bebbington, A., D. Humphreys Bebbington, J. Bury, J. Lingan, J. P. Muñoz and M. Scurrah (2007) 'Los movimientos sociales frente a la minería: disputando el desarrollo territorial andino' ('Social Movements in the Face of Mining: Contested Territorial Development in the Andes'), in J. Bengoa (ed.) *Territorios rurales: Movimientos sociales y desarrollo territorial rural en América Latina* (*Rural Territories: Social Movements and Rural Territorial Development in Latin America*), pp. 283–315. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Catalonia.

Carroll, T. F. (1992) *Intermediary NGOs: The Supporting Link in Grassroots Development*. Westport, CT: Kumarian Press.

Cleaver, F. (2005) 'The Inequality of Social Capital and the Reproduction of Chronic Poverty', *World Development* 33(6): 893–906.

CPRC (2004) *Chronic Poverty Report 2004–5*. Manchester and London: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

Crossley, N. (2002) *Making Sense of Social Movements*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Dagnino, E. (forthcoming 2007) 'Challenges to Participation, Citizenship and Democracy: Perverse Confluence and Displacement of Meanings', in Anthony Bebbington, Samuel Hickey and Diana Mitlin (eds) *Can NGOs Make A Difference? The Challenge of Development Alternatives*, Ch. 3. London: Zed.

Du Toit, A. (2004) '"Social Exclusion" Discourse and Chronic Poverty: A South African Case Study', *Development and Change* 35(5): 987–1010.

Edelman, M. (1998) 'Transnational Peasant Politics in Central America', *Latin American Research Review* 33(3): 49–86.

Edelman, M. (1999) *Peasants against Globalization: Rural Social Movements in Costa Rica*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Edelman, M. (2003) 'Transnational Peasant and Farmer Movements and Networks', in Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (eds) *Global Civil Society 2003*, pp. 185–220. London: Oxford University Press.

Edelman, M. (2006) Commentary on session of the Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Puerto Rico (March).

Escobar, A. (1992) 'Reflections on "Development": Grassroots Approaches and Alternative Politics in the Third World', *Futures* 24(5): 411–36.

Escobar, A. (1995) *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Escobar, A. and S. Alvarez (eds) (1992) *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy and Democracy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Evans, P. (ed.) (1996) *State–Society Synergy: Government and Social Capital in Development*. Berkeley, CA: Institute for International Studies.

Ferguson, J. (1990) *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Foweraker, J. (2001) 'Grassroots Movements and Political Activism in Latin America: A Critical Comparison of Chile and Brazil', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 33: 839–67.

Fox, J. (1996) 'How Does Civil Society Thicken? The Political Construction of Social Capital in Mexico', *World Development* 24(6): 1089–1103.

Green, M. and D. Hulme (2005) 'From Correlates and Characteristics to Causes: Thinking about Poverty from a Chronic Poverty Perspective', *World Development* 33(6): 867–79.

Habermas, J. (1987) *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 2: System and Lifeworld*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Harriss-White, B. (2005) 'Destitution and the Poverty of its Politics: With Special Reference to South Asia', *World Development* 33(6): 881–91.

Harvey, D. (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hickey, S. and S. Bracking (2005) 'Exploring the Politics of Chronic Poverty: From Representation to a Politics of Justice?', *World Development* 33(6): 851–65.

Hickey, S. and A. Du Toit (2007) 'Adverse Incorporation, Social Exclusion and Chronic Poverty'. CPRC Working Paper No 81. Manchester and London: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

IBRD/WB (2007) *Global Monitoring Report 2007. Millennium Development Goals: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States*. Washington, DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank. Available online: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGLOMONREP2007/Resources/3413191-1176390231604/1264-FINAL-LO-RES.pdf.

de Janvry, A. (1981) *Land Reform and the Agrarian Question in Latin America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kabeer, N. (2005) 'Snakes, Ladders and Traps: Changing Lives and Livelihoods in Rural Bangladesh'. CPRC Working Paper No 50. Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

Kay, C. (2004) 'Rural Livelihoods and Peasant Futures in Latin America', in R. Gwynne and C. Kay (eds) *Latin America Transformed: Globalization and Modernity*, pp. 232–50. London: Arnold (2nd edn).

Laurie, N., R. Andolina and S. Radcliffe (2002) 'The Excluded "Indigenous?" The Implications of Multi-ethnic Policies for Water Reform in Bolivia', in R. Sieder (ed.) *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy*, pp. 252–76. New York: Palgrave.

Lucero, J. A. (2006) 'Indigenous Political Voice and the Struggle for Recognition in Ecuador and Bolivia'. Background paper for the World Development Report 2006. Available online: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/0,,contentMDK:20548448~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:244363,00.html:).

MacFarlane, C. (2004) 'Geographical Imaginations and Spaces of Political Engagement: Examples from the Indian Alliance', *Antipode* 36(5): 890–916.

McAdam, D., S. Tarrow and C. Tilly (2001) *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, J. and M. Zald (1977) 'Resource Mobilization and Social Movements', *American Journal of Sociology* 82(6): 1212–41.

Melucci, A. (1985) 'The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements', *Social Research* 52(4): 789–816.

Mitlin, D. (2006) 'Social Movements and Urban Chronic Poverty'. CPRC Working Paper No 64. Manchester and London: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

Ospina, P., C. Larrea, M. Arboleda and A. Santillana (2006) *En Las Fisuras del Poder. Movimiento Indígena, Cambio Social y Gobiernos Locales*. Quito: Instituto de Estudios Ecuatorianos.

Perreault, T. (2006) 'From the Guerra del Agua to the Guerra del Gas: Resource Governance, Neoliberalism and Popular Protest in Bolivia', *Antipode* 38(1): 150–72.

Roberts, R. (1984) *A Classic Slum*. London: Penguin.

Shepherd, A. (2007) 'Understanding and Explaining Chronic Poverty: An Evolving Framework for Phase III of CPRC's Research'. CPRC Working Paper 80. Manchester and London: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

Slater, D. (ed.) (1985) *New Social Movements and the State in Latin America*. Amsterdam: CEDLA.

Tilly, C. (1985) 'Models and Realities of Popular Action', *Social Research* 52(4): 717–47.

Townsend, J., G. Porter and E. Mawdesley (2004) 'Creating Spaces of Resistance: Development NGOs and their Clients in Ghana, India and Mexico', *Antipode* 36(5): 871–89.

Tsing, A. (2004) *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connections*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wolford, W. (2004a) 'This Land is Ours Now: A New Perspective on Social Movement Formation', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94(2): 409–24.

Wolford, W. (2004b) 'Of Land and Labor: Agrarian Reform on the Sugarcane Plantations of Northeast Brazil', *Latin American Perspectives* 31(2): 147–70.

World Bank (2001) *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

World Bank (2006) *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Anthony Bebbington is Professor of Nature, Society and Development in IDPM, University of Manchester (Harold Hankins Building, Booth Street West, Manchester M13 9QH, UK), an ESRC Professorial Fellow, and member/research affiliate of the Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales, Peru. His work addresses the relationships among civil society, livelihoods and development, and more recently development conflicts and extractive industries. His most recent book is *Development Success: Statecraft in the South* (Palgrave 2007, with W. McCourt).