Social movements and chronic poverty
across the urban-rural divide:
concepts and experiences

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

This paper develops a series of arguments regarding the contribution of social movements to the reduction of chronic poverty in both urban and rural social contexts, building on the more specific arguments developed in CPRC Working Papers Nos. 63 and 64). This short, more analytically oriented summary identifies some of the critical conceptual and strategic issues raised in those two papers. The discussion gives special attention to those aspects on which there is an emerging consensus between the urban and rural analysis. The summary is divided into three sections addressing: the relevance of social movements to the chronically poor; social movements and the representation of the chronically poor; and the interaction between the state and movements of the poor, with a special focus on the influence of social movements on policy and politics.

Our discussion suggests that the power of social movements lies less in their ability to influence the specifics of policies and programmes, and rather more in their capacity to change the terms in which societies debate poverty and social change, and to influence the types of development and policy alternatives that are considered legitimate in a given social and political context. While our discussion argues that movements are essential actors in a chronic poverty agenda, the combined effects of neo-liberalism and the internal constraints on movements, requires that we remain cautious about the capacities of social movements to shift fundamental processes of exploitation, most notably those related to the underlying processes of contemporary capitalism. While social movements seem able to achieve limited political gains in these contexts, these gains modify, but do not significantly change, the processes that determine the creation of poverty and, in some cases, social exclusion.

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1.   Introduction

This paper develops a series of arguments regarding the contribution of social movements to the reduction of chronic poverty in both urban and rural social contexts.[1] Movements are understood as politicised collective activities *of* and *for* the poor – and the concept of movement refers to a process of mobilisation rather than any specific organisation or set of organisations. Thus, while formal organisations can be *part of* social movements, movements are more than formalised actors and also include the more nebulous, uncoordinated and cyclical forms of collective action, popular protest and networks that serve to link both organised and dispersed actors in processes of social mobilisation. Movements are, thus, processes of collective action, dispersed but also sustained across space and time. Or, as Ballard *et al.* (2005, p. 617) suggest in the context of South Africa, social movements are "politically and/or socially directed collectives" of usually several networks and organisations that are aiming to change elements of the political, economic and social system.

Without the market opportunities open to economic elites, the social status of the upper classes or the bureaucratic authority available to state agents, the poor have to find alternative sources of power, if they are to be successful in challenging for resources, political inclusion or other changes required for poverty reduction. Particularly in a democratic state, social movements, or demonstrated mass actions, are one of the legitimate sources of power that are open to them. Moore argues (2003, p. 303) "[I]t is one of the "givens" of political science that poor people in poor countries have few political resources and become politically effective only through collective action." There is a presumption in this overview paper that mass movements offer important possibilities for political success, helping the poor to secure a political response to the problems that they face.

As elaborated below, our argument is that social movements respond to specific difficulties, challenges and grievances rather than to poverty itself. As a way of thinking about the links between movements and underlying systemic pressures, Hickey and Bracking (2005, p. 852) draw on a distinction made by David Harvey. They comment: "Harvey identifies two forms of asset distribution and governance, 'accumulation by exploitation' and 'accumulation by dispossession,' noting how the former, workplace centred process has historically generated labour movements, trade unions, and related political organizations. Meanwhile, resistance to accumulation by dispossession (as with the 'privatization' of land and water) has tended to take the form of 'new' social movements, around issues such as land and minority rights (Harvey, 2003, p. 160)" (Hickey and Bracking, 2005: 852). To this distinction we might add a notion of accumulation by systematic exclusion that leads to sustained denial of assets (and thus accumulation possibilities) to particular groups - a clear example here is the persistent lack of secure tenure and basic services.[2] To the extent that these distinct types of accumulation can elicit resistance, the important general point (supported by this overview) is that, in addition to challenging particular institutions and structures, movements also emerge to challenge the underlying dynamics of the political economy.

The two contributions on which this paper is based analyse aspects of rural and urban social movements in addressing the needs and interests of the chronically poor. This short summary identifies some of the critical conceptual and strategic issues raised in those two papers. The discussion elaborates in particular those aspects on which there is an emerging consensus between the urban and rural analysis. The summary is divided into three sections

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[1] In doing so it's explicit goal is to summarise and synthesise material presented and discussed in two earlier CPRC working papers, Number 63 and Number 64 (Bebbington, 2006; Mitlin, 2006).

[2] Such accumulation by exclusion might also be thought of as accumulation through evasion of the costs associated with the spatial patterns of development that emerge from the requirements for a capitalist labour force.

addressing: the relevance of social movements to the chronically poor; the representation of the chronically poor; and the interaction between the state and movements of the poor, in particular the influence of social movements on policy and politics.

2.   The relevance of social movements

Social movements rarely emerge around poverty *per se*, and social movements of the chronically poor are even rarer – in large measure because the chronically poor are so asset-deprived that engaging in organisation, mobilisation or political action would demand time, social networks and material resources that they do not have.

The reasons why the poor (rather than the chronically poor) rarely organise for purposes of protest are somewhat more complex. It appears that much of the adversity of being poor is accepted and households follow individualised strategies to improve their opportunities. Social movements do, however, emerge in response to forms of social relationship and dynamics of capital accumulation that are implicated in the creation and reproduction of poverty, chronic and otherwise. Movements also emerge to resist acts judged to be oppressive by the movements' participants. The poor, including the chronically poor, are drawn into social movements that respond to perceived needs, interests and social affiliations, and, in some cases, social movements are involved in specific issues that motivate them to seek to involve the chronically poor in their campaigns and activities (generally with the objective of securing greater representation within a given population and hence greater political strength).

Three distinct types of social movement can be identified:

- Those that act against exploitation through patterns of market accumulation (e.g. those related to extractive industries, trade liberalisation and labour markets). These movements involve those in particular trades and industries as well as networks of social and environmental justice activists.
- Those that have emerged around, and affected, political debates on existing patterns of asset distribution and the regulations governing these distributions – especially rural land, urban land, urban basic services (water, sanitation). Members often share a strong neighbourhood and district base.
- Those that have tackled, and affected, the relationships of prejudice, be it based on gender, ethnicity, race or any other factor. These movements have a particularly strong basis in shared social identities.

In the remainder of this section we explore the relevance of these types of movements to the chronically poor, whilst in the following section we focus specifically on issues of inclusion and representation. This section also identifies the levels at which the social movements discussed here are active, a theme which bears directly on a further topic discussed later in the overview - the relationship between movements and government, political systems and structures at local, city, provincial and national levels.

In an urban context, the inclusion of the chronically poor is especially strong in movements based around securing tenure security as well as improvements in access to basic services and infrastructure. This finding resonates strongly with Escobar's (2004, p. 221) interest in place-based movements. The failures of modernity (using Escobar's language) are acute in low-income urban settlements. Out of this evident failure, alternatives have to be developed that offer as much security of tenure as possible and which deliver the basic services critical for viable livelihoods and reasonable health. The "modern" urban development promise of infrastructure and services, together with adequate residential land, is a long way away from many people's realities. The evident limits of what individuals and individual neighbourhoods can do in seeking adequate forms of urbanisation can create a perceived need for collective,

and sometimes movement-based, activities. That said, services and tenure security may also be provided through self-help organisation, the market or through a clientelist political system – in which cases, movements are less likely to emerge.

Movements based around neighbourhood issues such as tenure (for squatters) and services (for all residents) tend to be include more rather than fewer residents within any given locality. This reflects the need for numbers, in order to demonstrate both political legitimacy and voting potential – each important in attracting attention and approval from the political system. In addition to the pressure that emerges from the dynamics of interaction with the political process there are further advantages for the movement in encouraging such broad-based participation. In particular, it helps reduce opposition to its position within the neighbourhood. Urban movements focussing on collective goods and services are place-based movements in a double sense: at a micro-level, in that people realise their shelter within neighbourhoods, and at a meso-level, as the struggle for a more equal inclusion in resource distribution (related in part to issues and visions of citizenship) generally occurs at the level of the city. They may not however reach further than this level, and many urban movements do not have national or trans-national linkages.

Examples of land movements include those such as FEGIP (the Goiânia Federation for Tenants and *Posseiros*) which has fought to secure citizenship rights for *posseiros* (the name given to those occupying common land) in Goiânia, Brazil. By 1997, the city of Goiânia had officially registered 193 *posse* areas, 75 of which had been established by FEGIP members in the previous 17 years. Most of the others had been occupied in spontaneous replications. Some 200,000 people now live in these areas, one half of whom have been mobilised by FEGIP (Barbosa, *et al.,* 1997). More recently the National Slum Dwellers Federation together with Mahila Milan and SPARC (the Indian Alliance) in Mumbai have demonstrated that strategic movements can, at least in some contexts, secure a positive response from the state that results in the significant transfer of assets, in this case secure tenure. Tens of thousands of residents in Mumbai have secured housing as a result of organising by the Federation in the context of resettlement related to railway clearances (to improve transport services) (Patel *et al.,* 2002). In the first case, participants were self-selected with the movement drawing in those willing to participate in land invasions. In the second case, inclusion was determined by entitlement, as all households within a specific area were allocated housing. This second case is particularly interesting because it was the scale of organisational capacity among the poor that offered the state the opportunity to resettle the population without entering into protracted and sometime irresolvable cases to verify entitlements. We return later to the notable scale and success of these movements in securing asset transfer in favour of the poor.

In a rural context, some of the most significant movements in addressing chronic rural poverty have been, perhaps, those based on ethnic identity.[3] These movements can be understood as challenging the "terms of recognition" (Appadurai, 2004; Lucero, 2005) 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. Analytically, such adverse terms of recognition are one of those structures that chronic poverty frameworks would understand as helping produce and reproduce poverty. Of particular interest is the ways in which such movements have evolved over time: from rural roots they have become rural and urban; from civil society roots they have entered the state; from being heavily influenced by nongovernmental and Church social movement organisations, they have become progressively grounded in their own social organisations and networks of mobilisation; and while emphasising protest they have become increasingly constructive and

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[3] As discussed in the following section, ethnicity is less important as the basis for movement activity by the poor(est) in urban areas.

programmatic over time. These transitions are the result of many factors, though overall they might best be understood as reflecting the steady modernization of indigenous peoples, itself an effect of both underlying processes of development (leading for instance to urbanisation and progressively more universal education) and development interventions deliberately targeting at strengthening the human, collective and political capacities of these peoples.

As part of this increasingly modern, and assertive orientation, the discourses and practices of these movements have gone beyond gaining access to particular types of asset to include building 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 (cf. Bebbington *et al.,* 2006a) or "counter-public" (Andolina, 2003, p. 733) spaces in which novel debates on development, democracy and rights can, and have, occurred. One of the "successes" of the indigenous movement in Ecuador was to influence the new constitution of 1998 which now includes a chapter on indigenous collective rights:

> that are unprecedented in their collective character and in their pertinence to non-Western cultural beliefs and practices: 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, pp. 747-8).

The Ecuador case is thus one in which movements have influenced inter-ethnic relationships and the relative standing and power of indigenous people, and for this reason it has been one of the most celebrated cases of a social movement (at least among Latin Americanists). The implications for chronic poverty appear clear, at least at one level. The movement has created public debate on, and fostered constitutional change around, some of the relational and structural causes of chronic poverty, and in the process has alleviated certain dimensions of this poverty – by increasing respect for and self-esteem of indigenous peoples. Yet at the same time, and at a more grassroots and tangible level, it remains the case that in the two municipalities in which indigenous organisations 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 (Bebbington, 2006; Ospina *et al.*, 2006).

The challenges of securing material improvements in incomes are no less in the urban context, where there are equal difficulties in securing more favourable outcomes in the labour market, both in respect of formal and informal employment, and entrepreneurship. Likewise, whilst successes have been achieved in terms of access to land and basic services, progress is slow and often involves deeper incorporation into goods and services markets. For example, secure tenure is generally associated with an expectation that the residents can afford to pay rates and other service charges; hence the struggle for inclusion achieves success when squatters are granted tenure but the poorest may find the costs too great and abandon the land that they have struggled to secure. This, perhaps, takes us back to Du Toit's (2004) insistence on speaking of adverse incorporation rather than social exclusion as the relational base of chronic poverty, if for the slightly different reason that this case makes evident that even if movements succeed in addressing the conditions of exclusion, they may have little effect on the conditions of adverse incorporation – and, as a result, material poverty is likely to persist in its chronicity.

Different types of movement operate at distinct levels, and orient their actions towards different levels of the state. In urban movements, much action happens at the level of the city

(see also Castells, 1983, and Sasson, 2004, p. 650). Movements are often defensive, seeking to maintain access to street space and residential land, and maintain and/or extend access to basic services. For many such movements the city is the primary sphere of political action because of the significance of local authorities in influencing the conditions under which informal enterprise activity takes place and the rules and regulations that govern access to land and basic services. In some cases (e.g. India, South Africa, Brazil) movements also direct important levels of action at state and provincial levels. It appears that the greater the potential for state subsidy finance, the more significant are these higher levels of government for movements. The rules and regulations within the international sphere appear to be less significant for urban citizens. There are few urban parallels to the small farmers demonstrating against WTO tariff barriers. There are significant issues such as the pressure towards the privatization of basic services which have provided a campaigning catalyst for social movements in a number of cities. However, these are not major issues for such social movements at the international level although they are taken up by Northern NGOs such as the World Development Movement. Hence, despite Sasson's argument, there is relatively little evidence of a new politics of the urban disadvantaged in a new "transnational economic geography" (Sasson 2004, p. 653). Instead, urban social movements tend to contest their issues, including those related to privatization, at a local level. As Perreault (2006, p. 151) notes, one of the exceptional aspects of the struggle against privatization in Cochabamba was the fact that it transcended the local.

This concentration on the city reflects the fact that urban social movements, especially those which involve the very poor, do not contest accumulation by exploitation. In part this is due to the fact that few of the chronically poor in urban areas have formal jobs. Sinha (2004, p. 130) quotes Mukhopadhyay who estimates that only 8% of India's workforce works in a sector that is organised by trade unions. Isamah (1994, pp. 123-152), discussing the contribution of trade unions in Nigeria and Zambia highlights the low levels of union membership, with the formal employment of 27% of the workforce in Zambia and 10% in Nigeria. Within the informal sector, vulnerabilities due to insecure contracts, personalised relationships and, often, multiple employers, make it difficult to organise against poor working conditions and low wages. The poor are forced to accept appalling labour market outcomes as a given. In other cases, the poor work as micro-entrepreneurs in trading and service activities with little remuneration. Begum and Sen (2005) describe how recently migrated rickshaw pullers in Dhaka "use up" their physical labour, failing to accumulate sufficient assets to provide for future needs. As a consequence, the educational status of their children is less than that of their peers who remained in rural areas. The sense of grievance may be strong but it is difficult to identify a focus for protest.

This city focus is less true of identity based rural movements – indeed, at the time of writing Ecuador was under siege from indigenous movements protesting the possible signing of a Free Trade Treaty with the US, and Bolivia has just elected a president with a strong base in indigenous movements, who emphasises his anti-neoliberal credentials and in April 2006 acted on a prior commitment to return hydrocarbons from private to national ownership[4]. Many forms of mobilisation and social movement have emerged to challenge processes of accumulation that occur both through exploitation and by dispossession. In rural areas, in Latin America, two of the most significant and frequent contexts in which this has occurred in recent times have been in response to policies of trade liberalisation, in particular the signing of free trade treaties, and to new forms of natural resource governance around minerals, hydrocarbons and water. Trade liberalisation – 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

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[4] It is not clear how far this is "nationalisation" as hydrocarbon deposits were always national property, with companies being given concession to extract them. The change is, apparently, that the government now insists that the hydrocarbons are state property post extraction also.

their products and thus the returns to their factors of production. Regardless of the technical arguments as to the final effects of trade liberalisation on poverty, these movements have emerged because they perceive that there will be an adverse effect on their livelihoods. Typically these movements bring together peasant and producer organisations, NGOs, research centres, trans-national activists, as well as a range of other national and international SMOs.

3. Issues of inclusion and representation

Writing on social movements tends often to become normative, with a related tendency to celebrate both the potential of movements to transform society and the role they play in making the political dimensions of development that much more visible. Yet movements suffer many constraints and here we refer specifically to the limitations on their ability to reflect the concerns of those who live in chronic poverty. This tendency for movements to exclude the very poorest has already been noted in the chronic poverty literature (e.g. see Hickey and Bracking, 2005, p. 861) and it can quickly lead to the dismissal of movements by policy makers. Yet, as we shall argue below, such problems of representation and internal democracy within movements are as much issues of structure as of intention or motivation. In this regard, the section deals with three distinct issues: the capacity of movements to represent the interests of the poorest; the capacity of movements to be democratic and accountable to the members; and the significance of external groups to encourage movements to represent the interests of the poorest more effectively.

3.1 Structures of exclusion in social movements

One evident problem is the extent to which movements capture the concerns and act in the interests of the poorest. In this sense movements suffer from similar problems to other organisations. First, the poor, and especially the very poor, lack time and resources to participate in mobilisations. Movements, thus, become captured by, or at the very least give most voice to, some interests more than others simply because the poor and poorest do not participate equally in the collective process. Second, in some cases, the poorest may be present but deselect themselves from participating in debates about strategic priorities and approaches because they lack the confidence and capacities to make their voices heard in the debates and arguments that lead, ultimately, to the formation of movement discourses and strategies. A third and further problem, elaborated below, is that the very poor may be "left out" because their condition is seen as more difficult and less easily incorporated into the demands of the movement. Hence many organisations emerging from urban labour markets, e.g. unions and trade associations, struggle to include the poorest, including most informal workers and traders[5], as do peasant economic organisations also (Bebbington, 1996). The lack of interest in drawing in tenants to struggles to secure basic services in some urban settlements is a further example. Fourth, the very poor may be included but the nature of the solution that is gained (be it either a market-influenced asset redistribution programme or a bureaucratically-managed cash transfer programme) may mean that they benefit less because of their poverty. Cabanas Díaz *et al.* (2000, p. 87) highlight the nature of the discriminatory processes that are replicated within grassroots organisations when they discuss the staggered invasion by 1500 households of El Mezquital in Guatemala City:

> The sites that were occupied and the form of their occupation reflect different economic situations and levels of organization. The poorest households ended up on the steep slopes of the ravines and in the areas around the sewage and waste water outlets, whilst some of the central areas of El Mezquital show relatively high levels of development and physical infrastructure. La Esperanza is

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[5] Hence the evolution of SEWA (the Self-Employed Women's Association) in Ahmedabad.

the most remote area with the most dangerous topographical conditions….When members of the community of El Mezquital refer to the sub-division of La Esperanza, they usually call it "that place down there".. a phrase which refers not only to the geographical position of the area but also to its economic and social remoteness.

The poorest may hesitate to be active in anti-eviction struggles having chosen to locate on the most precarious land that is the least likely to be regularised. As noted above, the ability of these groups to secure solutions that are inclusive (i.e. that the poorest can afford) is limited and many outcomes involve at least the partial payment of services charges. In such cases, even if the chronically poor are included in accessing benefits in terms of assets, they may not be able to afford to maintain those assets and, hence, in a relatively short time they may sell them to secure their monetary value, as exemplified by some housing provided through a capital subsidy in South Africa (Nell *et al.* quoted in Baumann, 2004).

The third problem mentioned above is exemplified through two studies of one of the most celebrated, South-based anti-globalization mobilisations – the water movement in Cochabamba, Bolivia, that contested the privatization of the cities' and region's water provision 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. Perreault (2006, p. 166) comments: "In the water war, irrigators consolidated their influence", but as Laurie *et al.* (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 organised sectors such as irrigators, miners or factory workers." Many similar urban-based struggles also exclude the poorest who may not possess secure residential tenure and may not be able to secure access to public services because they lack a legal claim over the land on which they are living. If they are tenants, they have a positive incentive to avoid improvements, as they fear rents in well-located areas will become unaffordable because of upgrading.

There is a further and much more subtle way in which the interests of the poorest tend to be pushed back or removed entirely from the agenda of social movements. As a groundswell of local protest builds, the poor may be equally involved. The movement's activities and discussions are likely to be located in the homes, neighbourhoods and workplaces of the poor as this is where the momentum of the campaign rests. As the campaign begins to achieve success in terms of a response from more powerful agencies, then the spaces occupied by the movement begin to shift. Leaders from the poorest members are likely to be disadvantaged by this shift, while the leaders that are most likely to be favoured are those with the language of the elite, who have literacy skills and who are familiar with more formal processes – their local social status and their life experiences are less likely to be those of the poorest. Hence, as the process becomes more politically successful, its capacity to be inclusive appears to decline. Issues about how movements engage with established powerful economic, political and social elites, and the consequence for different groups within movements, are rarely considered.

Harriss-White (2005) elaborates some of these concerns suggesting that whatever the problems when alliances are formed, in practice such a coming together may be rare. "Moreover, it appears that 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" (p. 887). While this may be overstated for certain circumstances – one can imagine larger urban movements that include the very poorest, not because of solidarity across income groups, but because the group has greater political strength if it is inclusive – her point seems more generally valid. Indeed, there is a group of the poorest that all such neighbourhood-based groups find hard to reach –

those who are no longer resident in a definable neighbourhood, possibly but not always the street homeless.

While the above examples focus more on questions of class and caste within movements, ethnic and racial identities can also become axes of social mobilisation that ultimately serves to exclude the poorest. For instance, Adetula (2005, p. 207) describes the situation in Jos (Nigeria) drawing a picture which seems to be reasonably representative of the situation: " ..'cultural associations' or ' development unions' are in practice 'regional' or 'state' associations made up of communities of people from the same region or province. Usually these are local populations of people who belong to different social classes, but are bound together by common cultural, ethnic or language identities…" Significantly, Adetula describes how such societies have political and commercial functions that help to maintain elites; practices such as the monthly contributions required by the Tiv Women's Association make the participation of the poorest very difficult. Hence while ethnicity may be a force for association, it is not clearly the basis for a broad-based, poverty-oriented social movement, at least not in an urban context. In rural contexts, it is perhaps more possible that ethnic-discrimination, such as that of indigenous peoples' has created a group that is more uniformly poor.

3.2 Dynamics of representation

To the extent that (as per our definition) movements are processes, alliances and networks rather than organisations, then the question of how poor people and their interests are represented inside movements is particularly complex. Under such a definition, movement leaders are not elected but rather emerge, and movement platforms are not formally discussed and voted on, but also emerge and then adapt to circumstances and negotiation among sub-leaderships and sub-groups inside movements. Thus, for instance, movements that are coalitions or alliances of organisations, which may themselves be movement organisations, have to resolve issues by negotiation rather than votes. Voting may play a part of the process but it is rarely that significant. Participating organisations to the alliance have, in a real sense, to be satisfied with the direction of activities for their participation to be meaningful; even if they do not formally withdraw, they may be inactive.

Movements do not therefore fit easily within the formalised voting behaviour associated with democratic regimes and organisations. In this sense, the dynamics of participation inside movements is perhaps better understood in terms of Hirschman's "voice, exit and loyalty" framework. That is, rather than vote, sub-groups in movements can deal with the direction being taken by movements, and the leadership emerging in movements, through three other strategies: audible complaints (voice) which may be manifested during demonstrations, parallel meetings, comments to the press; inactivity and slow-but-sure defection from movement activities (exit); and continued turnout at events and protests identified with the movement (loyalty). Thus judging the "democracy" of a movement vis-à-vis the poor and those who seek to represent their interests has to be done through assessing the on-going patterns of voice, exit and loyalty.

3.3 Social movement organisations and the push for inclusion of the poorest

In the absence of equal inclusion in social movements, how then might the poor be represented? In this vein, another of Harriss-White's observations assumes particular relevance: because of this lack of solidarity with the destitute, she says, "it becomes imperative to look to state and broader forms of civil society organisation in order to identify the means by which destitute people can be represented" (p. 887). The implication is that a special role of organisations within social movements might be to work against the tendency to exclude the poorest. That is, within movements, SMOs can play an important role in continuing to press for greater attention to poverty than movement dynamics would otherwise

allow. It is in this context that the somewhat more pro-active strategies of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) can be understood. SDI seeks to address the needs of the poorest living in urban neighbourhoods whilst recognising that successful mobilisation will require the involvement of higher income groups.[6] They have sought to construct a mobilisation process that engages women, as one of the more vulnerable groups, and which has a daily savings practice, to deter higher income residents for whom the extra effort of a daily process is not worth it because they can afford to save on a weekly or monthly basis. Local groups are challenged by Federation leaders and NGO support processes to ensure that strategies support the inclusion of the poorest. For example, when pavement dwellers in Mumbai were developing a housing design they proposed the use of shared latrines in order to deter gentrification (because the middle classes were not interested in purchasing housing without individual toilets) and to support collective action (the women understood that latrine management would require them to come together and organise cleaning and maintenance). However, the experiences within SDI also suggest that such an orientation needs to be consistently supported by a broader movement above that of the individual neighbourhood. Community leadership at higher levels of the process seek to orientate the process to one of inclusion rather than exclusion for both ideological and pragmatic reasons. Whilst some local organisations recognise the benefits of solidarity, others may be controlled by higher income and status residents who are concerned to maximise their own benefits. In other cases, there is a desire for solidarity but the opportunities and approaches favour those with higher incomes; for example, communities facing eviction in the Philippines can access low-income state loans through the Community Mortgage Programme, but the poorest may be forced to sell at a later date when the loan repayments become unaffordable.

Whilst SDI offers a specific and relatively well-documented example, it is far from being the only case in which actors within movements have sought to promote more equitable forms of social movement mobilisation. At a more general level, the Catholic Church (especially in its more social-justice oriented guises) has played a powerful role in this regard. The role of the Church in fostering the emergence of social movements whose agendas intersect with poverty reduction, and in then playing the role of a sort of guiding conscience in these movements, is recurrent – in indigenous, peasant, social justice and even environmentalist movements. Again, however, generalisations need to be made with caution. This role is perhaps apparent in some regions (e.g. Latin America and Asia) more than others; and of course, as pointed out by Levine and Mainwaring (1989) the Church includes both progressive and conservative elements.

In other institutions, NGOs (sometimes linked to the Church) have played a similar role. Carroll (1992) makes much of this point in his review of different types of intermediary organisation. Membership organisations do not emerge, he argues, through some sort of immaculate conception: always there are third parties (partly of the organisation, partly apart from the organisation) who are present at this conception, ease the birth and then serve as a kind of god-parent. Given the capacity limitations on many membership organisations, this role is especially important. Indeed, resources flowing to movements often pass through such NGO, church and other formal movement organisations, giving them some leverage in pressing for the inclusion of the poor.

All this said, such a movement organisation role is a sensitive one – organisations, though of the movement, are far less than the movement. To the extent that they are seen to involve themselves too much in internal processes (e.g. through insisting on particular ways of engaging the very poor) they may also be seen as interfering and overstepping their legitimate roles. Thus while they may play this role, they cannot be expected to play it too

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[6] The organising principles have proved to be popular with the network extending from the original six affiliating countries in 1996 to over 20 today with at least 12 countries having secured some level of state redistribution.

forcefully. The more successful they are in creating processes that enable the poorest to participate on an equal basis, the more effective they may be.

4. Interacting with the state: movements and pro-poor political agendas

4.1 Advancing with and within the state

Perhaps the most important, though not the only, way in which social movements advance the interests of their members is through engaging with the state. The effects of social movements – in political and public life – have been many. Three particularly significant strategies to shift the state can be identified: new governance systems that open up government processes; new ways of thinking about development which influence public debate as well as programme and policy design; and new ways of engaging the state in programmes designed by social movements. All involve both governance and resource allocation issues, and the governance implications are particularly strong in the first and last cases which are essentially strategies that aim to realign political relations between institutions. Such impacts go beyond simple effects on "policy," and engage the state at a more fundamental level. They are best understood as strategies that influence the nature of state and of the relationships between it and civil society (c.f. Salamon and Anheier, 1998).

Beginning with the first of these strategies, mechanisms have been put in place through which indigenous citizens are better able to rework and monitor existing forms of government through, for example, the creation of forms of people's assembly that shadow local governments. In Andolina's words (ibid: p. 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 democratisation 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.'

Such initiatives reflect the fact that some social movements have recognised that their ability to influence a democratic political process appears weak. The very nature of democratic political power implies some level of majority rule either nationally or through a decentralised political system. Whilst this might address the needs of large numbers of the poor, it is unlikely to address the specific needs of the poorest who are likely to be in a minority. Furthermore, the movement (if successful) may result in political inclusion but even where the poor are a majority it is not evident that there will be a political commitment among elites to support redistribution. The situation in South Africa is illustrative of the dilemmas faced by governments who are encouraged to adopt a model of development in which demands of economic growth are placed above the immediate needs of the poor; between 1996 and 2001 inequality in South Africa actually increased whilst the percentage of the population living below the poverty line did not fall (Human Sciences Research Council, 2004). This suggests that changes in the governance structure aimed at fostering increased attention to the more specific agendas of movements may be more successful in realising the interests of the poor than a general push for democratic inclusion. An example here might be the introduction of participatory budgeting – indeed, in São Paulo the movement for participatory budgeting emerged as a result of local movements' frustration with the electoral process and their realisation that alternative decision-making structures were required if policy was ever to shift (Abers 1998).

The second strategy, namely promoting new ways of thinking about development which might then go on to influence both public debate and specific programme and policy design, has received particular attention in the post-structural literature on social movements, most

clearly expressed in collections such as Escobar and Alvarez (1992) and Alvarez *et al.* (1998), as well as in the work of Arturo Escobar (1992, 1995). An important focus of this work has been to explore the effects of discourse on society and to show how sets of ideas, bodies of knowledge, and ways of framing relationships and "problems" in society have material effects on how social processes subsequently unfold, on how policies are defined, and on what is included and excluded in discussions of policy possibilities.[7] In the face of the power of discourse and ideas, authors such as Escobar and Alvarez argue that one of the most important contributions of social movements is that they destabilize these norms and taken for granted meanings. 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 debated, debates in which a broad range of actors can participate. Indeed, part of the process of creating such 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 (Bebbington *et al*, 2006a). The vehicles here are again many: movement activity 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 occur, 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 combined effect of increased indigenous people's organisation and mobilisation on the one hand, and of a concerted effort on the part of certain researchers (who might therefore be considered part of the indigenous rights movement, if not its organisations), has helped make the links between ethnicity and poverty visible and debated in ways that were not the case twenty years ago. Movements have thus changed ideas in society and these ideas have influenced policy.

In urban development, one of the most important new ideas that urban social movements have been promoting is to challenge the bureaucratic mode of state delivery – and here we move to our third strategy (engaging the state in programmes hatched by movements themselves). Given the massive scale of informality in urban areas, and the chronic resource scarcity faced by governments, that state has been ineffective in addressing poor people's needs for secure tenure and basic services. Hence some social movements have sought state resources for their own practices as they uncover and validate "…those subaltern knowledges and cultural practices worldwide that modernity itself shunned, suppressed made invisible and disqualified" (Escobar, 2004, p. 210). Through co-production with the state (that is, joint programmes in which both make resource contributions to programmes designed by the poor), social movements seek to engage the state on the terms of the poor, not on those of the state. However, in return, the poor have to offer something to the state to persuade them to support such activities. What they offer is an ability to solve urban development problems that are otherwise unsolved. An example of this is the case of the Railway Slum Dwellers Federation in Mumbai (Patel *et al.,* 2002). As explained above, the Federation was able to implement an enumeration scheme that then laid the base for a

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[7] 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 both write out of potential poverty reduction policy any attention to redistribution, anti-racist and positive discrimination measures, or other instruments that seek to rework social relations, and also create a discursive environment in which social protection, migration-enhancing, infrastructure interventions and other such targeted interventions are much more likely to be deemed "sensible" options. The popularity of bureaucratically-styled programmes to address poverty is one example of the present consequences of such thinking; hence these programmes are duplicated despite acknowledge problems of realising entitlements for the poorest. Slightly more complex are those arguments that say that poverty reduction strategies (and possibilities) are at once circumscribed and structured by dominant ideas about the nature and acceptability of poverty.

programme of resettlement entitlements, which in turn allowed more rapid improvement of transport services. As explained by the senior officer responsible for the Mumbai Urban Transport Project, this improvement programme had been delayed for over a decade due to an inability to secure resettlement. A second example is that of the less formalised community network attached to the Orangi Pilot Project, where self-help sanitation ultimately "pulled in" substantial state investment in secondary and tertiary networks including waste treatment facilities. However, it should be emphasised that these outcomes are exceptional and can only be achieved with significant explicit political pressure and very significant demonstrated self-help activities. A more common outcome is votes being offered in exchange for poor quality services that offer a very limited solution i.e. water taps without drainage.

In addition to co-producing services, movements have sometimes also become highly influential participants within policy discussions. However, this process can be fraught with tensions both within government as well as in its relationships with other sectors of society. When movements engage heavily with the state and fail, then a variety of results can ensue. In rural areas, one possible effect of such failure is the further radicalisation of movement processes with a possible move towards progressive ungovernability as subsequent movements see less and less reason to engage with, and ultimately move into, government. Thus it is not surprising that in contemporary Bolivia, many suggest that if the MAS government (a government born of social movement processes) fails it is not clear what will come next. Ecuador may provide something of a pointer in this regard – the failure (as seen by many principal actors within the indigenous movement) of the indigenous movement to have effected any significant change during the time that it was inside government has been one of the precursors to a pronounced radicalisation of the indigenous movement which, at the time of writing, has partly led to a government decision to pass the governance of five highland provinces over to the army in order to control further movement activity. However, we ought not only be pessimistic in this regard. Urban area experiences suggest no necessary shift towards ungovernability. Three outcomes can be identified within the recent past. In the case of Karachi and Pakistan, the inability of the migrant community to advance their case did in fact lead to increasing ungovernability and violent conflict (e.g., the MQM in Karachi). However, such failure can also lead to innovation by local movements. In Brazil, it can be argued that it was social movements' frustration with the existing political system in Porto Alegre (when they secured the election of a candidate who then did little to meet their needs) that led to a re-engagement through new governance options in the form of participatory budgeting. Innovations around pro-poor co-production (for example, from the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India and most recently in initiatives in São Paulo) have been a further response to the inability of the state to address the needs of the poor. Most sadly, a passive withdrawal to previous more clientelist structures appears to be the most common response to disappointment with political engagement.

4.2 A pro-poor political agenda – specific strategies

This final section considers some of the issues that movements face in moving forward within the pre-existing governance structures and relationships. The discussion begins with a consideration of the strategies that social movements use to engage the state, and then moves to consider the extent to which the poor can secure access to the power that they need to change their situation significantly.

Negotiation or confrontation
With respect to the specific strategies that movements may use for engagement, there is considerable debate on the relative effects of negotiation or confrontation. This theme recurs across the literature: the same theme emerges in discussions of civil rights movements and poverty programmes in the US South (Andrews, 2001), indigenous movements in Ecuador and Bolivia (Lucero, 2005), a range of social movements in South Africa (Ballard *et al.*,

2005), urban movements in India (MacFarlane, 2004), or rural movements in the Brazilian Amazon (Schmink, 2006). In particular, movements debate and argue about how far their strategies should be conciliatory or conflictive. Both within a given movement over time, and across movements at a point in time, the pattern is that "social 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, p. 629).

A reading of the literature on these issues presents us with the following questions. First, is it in social movements' interest to be confrontational towards the state, or do they progress further with their aims if they are less aggressive and seek for points of agreement and collaboration? Second, are their gains as much from the political response engendered by their mobilised presence as from their specific approaches (be they confrontational or collaborative)? Third, as suggested above, is it what groups struggle for that really matters? – that is, is it where they are going rather than how they get there that makes a difference (whilst recognising that the two are, to some extent, inter-related). The immediacy, importance and context-dependence of the answers to these questions suggest that the issue is not so much to build capacity to act among the poor, but rather to build strategic thinking capacity. This requires an institution to bring groups together consistently with an established leadership. Building knowledge among the leadership may in such circumstances take priority over leadership change. For example, the South African Homeless People's Federation was initiated in 1994 but towards the end of the 1990s tensions became evident. There were major disagreements about the best strategies to use for organising members, the significance of securing state housing subsidy finance, and the balance between a large scale of mobilisation with a relatively weak ideological base or a smaller movement with a stronger agreement about an alternative development vision. The federation eventually split several years after this. The new federation was built on a group of previous leaders who had a set of shared experiences about what had prevented successful local action. They were better able to take on difficult tasks such as building accountable and transparent financial management in grassroots organisations, and, they believed, to ensure that the government responded to people's priorities.

In some cases, direct action seems to be the only strategy that delivers any apparent effects. 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. If this is so, then violence and direct action seem to have been the only mechanisms through which movements have been able to influence the trajectories of regional development, and thus of poverty dynamics, in mine affected areas (Bebbington *et al.*, 2006b). Yet that study also showed that while direct action opened political space for change, the absence of strategic thinking capacity in movements meant that they were poorly equipped to occupy such space – and so the direction of change was still determined largely by business and the state. Other situations also show the importance of combining direct action under some contexts with strategic capacity under others. For example within the movement to secure tenure for tens of thousands of squatters living in the National Government Centre, Quezon City, Metro Manila, maximising benefits appears to require negotiating skills (Racelis, 2003). In this movement struggle, residents had resisted eviction under the Marcos regime but then had to switch to collaboration with the state to work out the process of asset transfer. More generally, the process of democratization opens up more negotiating possibilities including more open governance. The counter position is that negotiation may lead to co-option, or pressures towards co-option, and movements need considerable strength to maintain their own sense of direction. Barbosa *et al.* (1997, p. 28) discuss the attempts to co-opt FEGIP and argue that, despite gaining recognition, relations with the state continue to be problematic in many respects; "During the dictatorship, the repression of the urban *posses* [those occupying common land] was brutal and vicious: today the repression is more subtle and polite."

Reformist, conciliatory, negotiating approaches can have their costs though. 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. However, much of this is a consequence, he argues, of the neoliberal context rather than negotiation *per se*; of particular importance is the fact that the livelihood crises triggered by neoliberalism has increasingly led movements that initially emerged around justice and citizenship issues to ask for specific handouts and programmes to help the poor cope with crisis. However, the very act of negotiation also seems to push in the same direction, leading - he argues – movements and movement organisations to "lose their edge as defenders of the excluded and impoverished" (ibid: p. 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 demobilising movements (Foweraker, 2001, p. 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: p. 841). Such a conclusion is broadly supported by the experiences of social movements negotiating for land at the National Government Centre; the negotiation process focussed on the terms and conditions for those on the land without considering the situation of those who had come more recently and who still faced tenure insecurity (Mitlin and Samol, 1997).

MacFarlane (2004, p. 910) takes a different tack, and draws on the experience of the National Slum Dwellers Federation, *Mahila* Milan and SPARC (the Indian Alliance) to conclude that conciliatory, negotiating approaches are far more effective than direct protest. In this case, the objective of drawing state resources to support a people's development process means that approaches seek to convince rather than pressure the state. The Alliance uses a wide range of strategies including their international network and associated visits from foreign dignitaries to create positive space for negotiation (Patel and Mitlin 2002). However, arguably what makes a difference is their vision and direction, rather than specific strategies – and on rare occasions a more aggressive stance has been considered and used within the NSDF suite of strategies. More commonly, the Federation makes considerable efforts to have high profile mass mobilizations around events with selected politicians. Whilst the relationship with the politicians are positive, there is an implicit electoral threat that can be suggested by a rally of 20,000 evidently willing participants. Beyond the experiences of the Alliance, there is a more general ongoing debate among Asian social movements and associated NGOs about the relative merits of Alinsky[8] style grassroots organisations with an emphasis on claim-making in respect of the state, and an alternative which is more characterised by collaboration, local resource contributions and new alliances between state and citizen.

What emerges from this discussion is that movements need to demonstrate scale and use this scale to best effect. Confrontation may not be the best approach as it sets up a further dynamic, governments may not want to be seen to back down in the face of an organised interest group. However, the extent to which the government can manoeuvre to respond to the demands of the movement depends on the broad policy framework within which they are

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[8] For a recent perspective on Alinsky's methodology, see Mayo (2005). Saul Alinsky was a US labour organiser who developed a methodology for community organising which involves the use of confrontation with the state to provoke a response and build a local movement. Within the current Asian context, Alinsky-style organising seeks to use confrontation to push the state to concede the transfer of resources and the introduction of greater state entitlements for the urban poor. The alternative, of which SDI is the most clearly identifiable protagonist, uses collaboration to encourage the state to support more decentralized programmes in which they pass over resources for community managed processes. The approaches are presented, although the ideological issues not fully explored, in Masatsugu (2004).

working, and their own capacity to strategise to their advantage. The neoliberal framework, with its emphasis on the control of government expenditure, reduces the scale of resources available for redistribution (whilst at the same time increasing at least some needs) and therefore makes the task faced by movements more difficult. Moreover, governments, as suggested by Connolly's (2004, p. 106) discussion of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional's (Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI)) response to urban social movements in Mexico during the 1980s, can see that individualising benefits under the objective of targeting helps divide the poor and therefore helps to reduce the extent to which concessions build a momentum for greater redistribution.

Alliance building
Within our definition of social movements is a presumption of some kinds of formal or informal agreements, alliances, networks or configurations between organisations, associations and even less formal processes of collective action. Collaboration either between social movements and political groupings, or/and between movements and other civil society organisations, is very much a part of the logic of movement activity. Relations between movements and political parties are taken up below, whilst this section focuses on alliances within civil society.

It is difficult to draw any conclusions from the wide range of collaboration referred to in the literature referenced here, let alone the greater body of papers, journal articles, books and reports. As noted above, Carroll (1992) argues that membership organisations always involve some kind of support organisation and hence imply some kind of alliance between agencies. Whilst he may be overstating his case and some membership groups may emerge from localised collective action, it is unlikely that significant movements of the chronically poor will emerge without an alliance of some kind. Alliance building emerges from a multitude of sources. Within localities and groups of the poor, there are overlapping identities and group affiliations; for example, neighbourhood women leaders within the South African Homeless People's Federation were frequently active church members and/or involved with political parties. Whilst not necessarily an alternative source of ongoing support for movements of the poor, such overlapping membership facilitates coalition building around specific campaigns.[9] Equally, within low-income settlements there may be those who are income poor and/or asset poor, just as there is likely to be a mix of genders, ages and, in some cases, ethnic identities.

In terms of wider collaboration and alliance building, as noted by Crossley (2002) various analyses suggest the important role played by agencies (social movement organisations) that have financial resources and elite contacts in supporting movement activity.[10] Movements of the poorest are unlikely to have even small monies required to meet together within a city, let alone secure the finances needed for an extensive campaign from their own meagre incomes. Such realities bring groups together and have their own sets of social relationships that have to be managed alongside more ideological affiliations. In many cases, relationships are vertical, linking movements of the poor with professional support agencies of various kinds (c.f. Carroll, 1992). In an urban context, city issues such as transport may provide for common ground between neighbourhoods with very different income levels (CODI, 2005).[11] Movement collaboration may also involve horizontal links and Etemadi

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[9] An observation not so distinct from Putnam's (1993) argument that participation in civic organisations (choral groups say) can serve to facilitate political linkages.

[10] See, for example, Crossley's (2002, p. 92) discussion of McAdam (1982) and the significance of church and college support for the black civil rights movement.

[11] See Bhutto (2006) for an example of the perspectives of higher income groups on the evictions related to road redevelopment reproduced at http://www.achr.net/eviction_kara_2002.htm However, this interest cannot be assumed and the well publicised case of Sandton in Johannesburg shows that higher income neighbourhoods may see little value in such collaboration.

(2000, p. 60) describes a process in Cebu City (the Philippines) to define and lobby for a common political agenda among urban poor groups.

Such alliances, perhaps inevitably, are associated with tensions. Mageli (2004) discusses those within the National Coalition for Housing Rights in India. Unnayan, a Calcutta based NGO, catalysed the Coalition to organise lobbying to further the right to housing in India. At the same time, Unnayan provided support for a new people's (mainly squatters) movement, Chhinnamul that was pushing for housing access and improvements in Calcutta, primarily through demonstrations and street protests. Mageli (2004, pp. 132-3) explores the divisions that emerged between the NGO, the Coalition and Chhinnamul over issues such as financial re-numeration for activists, the ideological direction of activities, and the lack of immediate improvements in living standards in the squatter communities. What such experiences highlight is that relationships within movements are in flux. Affiliations are generally made in relation to specific political goals and both activities and ideologies are actively contested within movements. The very lack of formal organisational rules enables directions and affiliations to change rapidly.

Overall the argument is that what really matters is the mobilising and strategising capacity of the social movement rather than specific demands, alliances and negotiating strategies. That is alliances *per se* are not as important as knowing *how and when* to engage in them. Politicians that see large, active, mobilisations are likely to respond with concessions and resources, especially close to election time. In this context, the capacity of a movement to mobilise significant numbers of supporters may matter more than whether or not it is seeking to negotiate with or confront any politician.

Movements and political parties
Whether to negotiate or confront, and what alliances to build and how, are also accompanied by another choice that movements face in deciding how to engage the state and bring their issues to the table. In part, this is the choice of if and how to engage with registered political parties. As in the prior discussion, this alliance is also one whose appropriateness and form varies with context. In some instances, movements emerge in a close relationship with parties, serving as an important base for these parties. In such instances the movements are perhaps more likely to see their concerns present in party platforms – and government platforms should the party move into power. Possible instances of this (albeit with many nuances and complications) may be the relationships between movements and the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT; Workers' Party) in Brazil, the communist party in Kerala and the Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia.[12]. The complexity of such alliances is illustrated by the changing relationships between social movements, the African National Congress and the trade unions in South Africa.

In other instances – and perhaps more often – movement leaders have to decide if and how to engage with already existing parties, whose social bases are already established and may be quite distinct from those of the movement. An example here was the decision of much of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement to develop an alliance with the party Pachacutik-Nuevo País.[13] Managing the alliance is far more complex in such cases and there seem to be few examples where such conjunctural alliances lead ultimately to long standing

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[12] Historically the relationship between labour movements and Labour and Social Democratic parties in Europe may have been other such examples – but ones which also show that the relationship and the possibility for leverage are by no means fixed over time.

[13] This is significantly different from the frequent localised preferential support (at least on a temporary basis at election time) given by grassroots organisations; Lavelle *et al.* (2005, p. 954) find that 33 per cent of neighbourhood associations in Sao Paulo supported specific political candidates during elections.

relationships. Such alliances seem far more likely to lead ultimately to the political instrumentalisation of the movement.

It is perhaps such experiences that influenced Jockin Arputham, ex-president of the National Slum Dwellers' Federation in India to persuade the Federation to adopt a policy of avoiding alignment with any single political party. Jockin's perspective is that no party addresses the needs of the poor and hence a movement of the poor has to be free to negotiate with whatever party is in power so as to further its interest. The realities of this position are elaborated by Federation members in Orissa who explained that, in terms of tenure security and access to basic services, it made no difference which political party controls the city governments in the state.[14] Moreover, the women leaders argued that organising would be very difficult if they were politically aligned as different political parties are already organised within low-income settlements and they are very competitive, only assisting those residents who are "correctly" affiliated. It is the Federation's experience that developing a broad-based movement in urban India requires non-alignment (Appadurai, 2001, p. 29); as a result their party political linkages are diverse.

In an urban context, tensions arise because political parties actively seek to influence and control organisations of the urban poor to further their electoral interests. Hence even as movements seek to persuade parties to adopt policies that further the interests of their affiliates and/or members, so parties seek to influence the position of the movement or SMO. It is important to recognise a three-way dynamic interaction between movements, movement leaders and parties. Lavelle *et al.*, (2005, p. 952) argue that civil organisations with political links are more likely to participate in participatory spaces because they involve the design of such institutions and are better informed with the expertise needed to participate; however, they ignore the further reason which is that parties seek to influence such spaces and hence have an interest in ensuring (through politically committed leaders) that affiliated civil organisations are active. Experiences appear to vary significantly depending on factors such as the level of political competition.

Movements are political agents and will align with political parties when they believe it serves their interests. As highlighted by the discussions in Orissa, in many cases there are different political affiliations between low-income residents and movements may gain upward linkages with committed political relations but may reduce the breadth of their organising appeal across neighbourhoods. Movements may be at a relative disadvantage in these alliances as, in many cases, the party apparatus is more disciplined than the movement and has a greater organising capacity. Movements' advantage is that they reflect the concerns of their members who care sufficiently to invest notable time in activities. Especially close to elections, movements have a considerable asset to offer with some potential to secure a positive response but success depends both on the possibilities that they are able to create, and on their ability to negotiate wisely.

And what might international cooperation policy do?
The contentious nature of social movements complicates any reflection on policy, because much of the strength and potential contributions of social movements to chronic poverty reduction come from their oppositional nature and their willingness to engage in contentious politics. Any effort to domesticate that nature, with funding, projects or invitations to sit at "tables for dialogue" risks weakening the very characteristic through which movements can influence the structures underlying chronic poverty. The moment movements are no longer feared, their ability to affect change is reduced; and when they receive state or official funding, the legitimacy of their ideas can easily be reduced.

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[14] Focus group discussions with city federation leaders from Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Paradip and Puri, 23-25 August 2006.

Where does this leave policy? On the one hand, it implies that the emphasis ought to be on the "enabling environment" for social movements, rather than on direct support. As Hickey and Bracking (2005, p. 861) conclude, "The increasingly well-accepted advice that donors should focus on securing an enabling environment through indirect and parametric support for associationalism and democracy more broadly rather than through directly subsidising civil society organisations themselves …. appears to remain sound." What might this mean in practice? First, the temptation for elites and governments to weaken, de-legitimise, incorporate or indeed repress social movements is always high. Thus, there is much to be done in areas that aim to offset this tendency. Providing support to Ombudsmans' of the People's offices and the protection of human and civil rights is one evident area. Another possible area is to support movements (and their organisations) to place their messages and arguments in public debate, through press slots, seminars, research and the like. This is of great importance if their ideas are to become part of the ways in which societies think about poverty and development.

There is also, however, a second route from social movements to policy which is also potentially of great importance. All movements run their course at some point or another, and many ultimately move towards electoral politics where, if successful, they become part of government. In some cases, they become not just part of government, but they become *the* government, especially when there is an organic link between movement and political party (cases here include the African National Congress in South Africa, the Movement Towards Socialism in Bolivia, and the pro-democracy movement and the Concertación in Chile). At this point, the movement becomes policy-maker, a process that can be fraught with tensions both within government as well as in its relationships with other sectors of society. For external actors, however, such governments can become the object of policy. Indeed, one conclusion would be that these are governments to support categorically, for at least two reasons related to poverty concerns. First, to the extent that such movements are elected on the basis of their arguments about the need to attack the relationships and institutions that produce poverty, then their presence in government provides a rare opportunity to pursue policies that address – in Green and Hulme's (2005) terms - the causes rather than the characteristics and correlates of poverty. Second, to the extent that such movement experiments inside government fail, then a likely effect is the further radicalisation of subsequent rounds of movement processes with a move towards progressive ungovernability as subsequent movements see less and less reason to engage with, and ultimately move into, government.

5.   Concluding thoughts

Chronic poverty writing has implied that social movements might have an important place in a chronic poverty agenda. Thus, it is that Green and Hulme's (2005) analysis and understanding of poverty leads them to the notion that people need to be empowered and mobilised in order to be more effective in influencing the governance of poverty reduction programmes: "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: p. 876). Or, in Naila Kabeer's terms, as she refers specifically to the tasks facing those seeking to support 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, 2004, p. 41).

The difficulty with such statements – at least when seen through a bureaucratic policy lens – is that they politicize discussions of chronic poverty and begin to suggest that policy is simply one more face of the practice of politics. This is also a message that many social movements seek to lay open. Such movements are about contention. They exist because of inequalities and felt injustices and in order to change society. They do not emerge with a primary concern

to "reduce" poverty or even to "attack" it – they emerge to attack systems, and the outcomes that they produce, particularly outcomes in respect of the distribution of resources. They seek to provoke profound social change and such social changes may be poverty reducing.

Movements' terrain of action is political, in the broadest sense. They work primarily on other actors: the changes they seek to effect are in others. This after all is also a definition of power – the ability to influence the actions of others. They challenge how people think of things - the ideas that are hegemonic in a society – and how people do things. In this process of changing the ideas and actions of others, they challenge both social relationships (by challenging how dominant groups have historically handled social relationships with dominated subalterns) and state policies.

It is in this context that the discussions here suggests that the power of social movements lies as much in their ability to change the terms of the debate and the nature of the alternatives that are legitimised and considered, as it does to influence the specifics of policies and programmes. This is the optimistic version. There is also a less positive face to our discussion, much of which has to do with the context in which movements operate. This is a context in which neoliberal rules of the game are deeply embedded in policy technocracies, and in which certain corporate forces appear progressively more powerful and more able to fashion not just the broad strokes but also the details of public policies. It is also a context in which the formal practices of democracy (voting, party politics) work to the disadvantages of movements. To the extent that movements almost by definition voice concerns of minorities whose interests are not met by dominant political and economic practices, then it is very difficult for them to make their concerns of interest to the principal players of the liberal democratic game. Movements rarely provide enough votes, and their concerns, almost by definition, upset the interest of others who may have more formal and financial power within the contours of liberal democracy. In such a context, it becomes that much more important that movements make the noise required to draw attention to the issues upon which they work – and even so, they are still unlikely to have much fundamental impact unless broad-based alliances can be built. And third, this is a context in which – liberal democracy notwithstanding – the use of violence to limit the advance of social movements remains acceptable. Both the reality and threat of such violence make the work of movements harder and can ultimately dissuade members from participating in social mobilisation.

While our discussion argues that movements are essential actors in a chronic poverty agenda, such a context, coupled with the internal constraints on movements, requires that we remain cautious about the capacities of social movements to shift fundamental processes of exploitation, most notably those related to the primary processes of capitalism. While social movements appear to be able to achieve limited political gains, these merely modify, but do not ultimately alter, the processes that determine the creation of poverty and, in some cases, social exclusion. Social movements, we suggest, can secure influence and greater accountability, though this still does not greatly shift fundamental development outcomes. Furthermore, any inclusion generally remains unequal – with the poorest struggling to maintain any gains – and unstable – as exclusion may still be extended once again by new and ongoing processes.

In this sense the need for social movements never goes away – the development and political challenges around which they emerge will always be with us. In this on-going role what matters, perhaps, is less the immediate tangible benefits that these movements secure than their capacity to maintain and extend those benefits. Democracy, it appears, increases the complexities of their struggles and the diversity of strategies that they need to adopt.

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