

Social movements and the
politicization of chronic poverty policy

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Abstract

Discussions of chronic poverty have emphasised the extent to which poverty is chronic because of the social relationships and structures within which particular groups of the poor are embedded. In this sense chronic poverty should be understood as a socio-political relationship rather than a lack of assets. In such an understanding, processes of social mobilisation become central to any discussion of chronic poverty because they are vehicles through which such relationships are argued over in society and potentially changed.

Parting from this observation, the paper reviews the roles of social movements in addressing chronic poverty. It focuses on three domains in which such movements might influence chronic poverty. First, it discusses their roles in challenging the institutions, social structures and political economy dynamics that underlie chronic poverty. In this domain, movements can play potential roles in changing the conditions under which accumulation occurs and attacking relationships of adverse incorporation. They can also change the relationships that underlie processes of social exclusion. Second, movements have played important roles in the cultural politics surrounding chronic poverty. They have helped change dominant meanings associated with poverty, and influenced the ways in which the poor are thought of in society. Third, in some instances movements – and in particular social movement organisations – have direct impacts on the assets that poor people own and control.

All this said, movements themselves suffer many internal weaknesses that can limit their contributions to changing conditions of chronic poverty in a society. Furthermore, at times elite groups and others aim to aggravate these weaknesses in efforts to dissipate the effects that these movements might have on existing relationships of power and patterns of accumulation.

Social movements' main contribution is, perhaps, that they politicize debates on chronic poverty. Any changes that they elicit owe much to this politicization and to the contentious, at times threatening, relationships between these movements and other social actors, government organisations and businesses. This contentious nature of movements complicates the extent to which policy might work directly with them. However, policy can do much to support environments that enable the work of, and protect the rights of, social movement activists and members. It can also provide more direct forms of support if and when movement organisations and activists shift strategies and ultimately take up positions in government – as has occurred in a number of regime transitions in the recent past.

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1. Introduction

By definition, chronic poverty is a condition that resists change. While one does not need to accept that social and political relationships alone explain the persistence of such poverty, a substantial body of recent writing suggests that such relationships must enter into any credible explanation of this persistence (Green and Hulme, 2005; Harriss-White, 2005; du Toit, 2004; World Bank, 2006). If we accept this, then it is a short step to entertaining the argument that any given depth and breadth of chronic poverty (perhaps at any spatial scale of analysis) is related to the levels and forms of social mobilisation in society around issues that either affect or constitute poverty. To the extent that levels of social mobilisation affect the ideas and concerns that gain attention in society, the relative power of different actors to influence debates on, and policies for, poverty reduction and the ways in which resources are distributed (both on average and at the margin), then this argument seems potentially defensible.

This paper explores this argument and analyses actual and potential relationships between social movements and chronic poverty. The first part of the paper discusses in more detail – and on the basis of recent reflections on chronic poverty (and poverty more broadly) – why social movements are relevant to any reflection on chronic poverty. Various authors have already invoked "social movements" when outlining the conditions under which chronic poverty might be reduced. Yet, in most cases, this is done without any more disaggregated reflection on what is meant when the term is used. Yet how one understands social movements has direct relevance for how one thinks of their potential relationship to chronic poverty reduction. Hence this introductory section also discusses the nature of such social movements and ways in which their form and emergence might be conceptualized.

On the basis of these two reflections – on chronic poverty and on social movements - the second section explores pathways through which social movements might be related to the politics of chronic poverty reduction. To the extent that such pathways exist, this immediately raises the issue of how far policy might be able to build on, work with and strengthen these pathways. Thereafter the third main section and conclusions offer a more specific discussion of the interface between policies for addressing chronic poverty and social movements.

To illustrate these arguments and the issues raised, different sections of the paper refer to cases in which movements have apparently affected the conditions under which chronic poverty is reproduced. Among the most frequently referenced cases are: movements that challenge patterns of accumulation (those related to extractive industries and trade liberalisation) which are deemed by some actors within the same movements to contribute to poverty; movements that have emerged around, and affected, political debates on existing patterns of asset distribution – especially rural land; and movements that have tackled, and affected, the relationships of ethnic prejudice and racism that underlie poverty. The examples are drawn largely from Latin America, and refer in particular to rural experiences.

2. Chronic poverty and social movements: mirror concepts for the politicization of poverty?

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, and incur risks they are unlikely to tolerate (Cleaver, 2005). 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. A quick run through some "classic" types of social movement makes this clear. Indigenous movements, women's movements, Afro-Latino movements, and landless people's movements are all 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: in these examples, relationships of racism, ethnic prejudice, patriarchy and land ownership. Other movements are directed against forms of capital accumulation that are deemed adverse to human-well being: anti-globalization movements, environmental movements protesting deforestation or oil and mineral extraction, fair trade movements and so on. Of course, social relationships are closely related to forms of accumulation (patterns of participation in ownership and regulation, for instance, affect the forms that economic growth takes and how its benefits are distributed). Likewise, identity based movements are generally also concerned that the social relationships that they are contesting are also implicated in the ways in which wealth is distributed and markets regulated – as for instance when Ecuadorian indigenous movements protest the signing of a Free Trade Treaty with the US. That said, the relative emphasis on social relations or forms of accumulation as the source of disadvantage evidently varies depending on the movement concerned. Likewise, the extent to which movements target the state and its policies, or the public sphere and its dominant debates, also varies – though elements of each are often present, albeit in different degrees.

Such movement orientations are in some sense the corollary of the messages emerging from some of the literature on adverse incorporation on the one hand, and the quality and forms of economic growth on the other hand. The adverse incorporation and social exclusion streams (see also Hickey and du Toit, 2006)¹ of the chronic poverty literature 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 forms of economic development, in both its liberal (World Bank, 2001; 2006) and more radical forms tends to suggest that the relative persistence of extreme poverty is more an effect of the forms that growth and market formation take.

In this section we explore these points of contact between conceptions of chronic poverty and social movements. This helps lay the base for identifying possible causal pathways between social movements and the nature and dynamics of chronic poverty in a given society.

2.1 Interpretations of chronic poverty: politicizing poverty debates

In a recent essay, Green and Hulme (2005) argue that, important as having a clear language on the characteristics and defining features of poverty might be, a descriptive and definitional approach to poverty has the effect that "poverty comes to be seen as a lack of resources rather than an absence of entitlements, as an 'economic' rather than a political problem" (ibid: 869). Therefore, they argue, it is imperative to develop concepts of poverty that incorporate within them an understanding of the causes of poverty. In the absence of such an approach to poverty, they suggest that interventions will be targeted at symptoms of poverty rather than its drivers, and for that reason will have little effect. 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 often 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

¹ Some argue that these streams are quite distinct, the exclusion writing implying that the problem is lack of incorporation, and the adverse incorporation writing suggesting that the problem resides instead in prejudicial forms of incorporation (du Toit, 2004). Still, both suggest that social relations underlie their problematization of chronic poverty and its causes.

helps reveal the social and political processes that make people poor and keep them in poverty." (Green and Hulme, 2005: 869).

As they elaborate this line of thinking, Green and Hulme do not explicitly invoke the idea of social movements. However, their analysis and understanding of poverty leads them at the very least 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: 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, 2005, p. 41).

Harriss-White (2005) pushes in a rather similar direction as she reflects on the possibilities that anything might be done to address destitution. For her, the workings of power – embodied in and exercised through distinct sets of social and political economic relationships – are central to the production of destitution. The destitute are exploited, denigrated, and ignored, deemed less than citizens by others – all acts of power that reproduce their destitution. In the face of this power, even if the destitute have agency of some sort, this is merely an agency that allows them to "defy death" (ibid: 887) – it does not allow them to challenge the conditions of their existence or the powers that reproduce their 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 challenged by the existence of the destitute. While some of this challenge may derive from the sense that the destitute may be vectors of disease or more generally a source of negative externalities, it is at least imaginable that it might also derive from fears inspired by levels of aggression and mobilisation among the destitute and those who might identify with them. Again 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" (ibid: 881; 889) and "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" (ibid: 887). Such movement activity is rare, however, and faces many barriers – not least because, she suggests, the destitute have few allies in society.

Hickey and Bracking extend such reflections further. "Chronic poverty is an inherently political problem" they comment, and "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: 851). The challenge, then, is to understand the possible sources of such political change. Hickey and Bracking are clear that there is no panacea in this regard. Political parties, social movements, civil society organisations (especially advocacy-oriented ones) and some political elites may all have a role to play, but each comes with a health warning. Some of the potential pitfalls in any reliance on, or alliance with such actors, might include a systematic lack of interest in the very poorest except for reasons of patronage, institutional fragility, or tendencies towards self-serving behaviour – all calling into question any inherent pro-poor qualities of these actors. The more general point that Hickey and Bracking make, however, and that is relevant for the discussion here, is that political action and change are essential if chronic poverty is to be addressed. This means not only linking civil society and political society (for instance through social movement/NGO/political party links), but also linking social mobilisation and justice-based forms of agency with the state – and more exactly, with processes of state formation.

Few if any of these politically sensitive analytical interventions suggest that social movements are in and of themselves vehicles for addressing chronic poverty. Instead they suggest such movements can be vehicles for forms of political action that attack the social relationships underlying chronic poverty and that therefore increase the likelihood that chronic poverty will be addressed, by by whom? Almost always the implication is "by the state" or perhaps more exactly "by a state", a state that still does not exist. That is, social movements are the progenitors of change in the form and culture of the state, and this is their main contribution to chronic poverty reduction.

But this is to jump the gun of the argument of this paper. First having suggested that one body of the chronic poverty literature invokes social movement activity as essential to any programme through which such poverty might be addressed,² we must also look to social movement writing to see what has been said about the extent to which these social movements might play such a role. Furthermore, given the tendency of chronic poverty writing to invoke social movements without ever really saying what they are, it is important to look at the social movement writing for the contours of definitions that may help imagine the role of "something called social movements" in chronic poverty reduction. To this we now turn.

2.2 Interpretations of social movements: poverty and cultural politics

One ever-present and often unclear distinction in the study of social movements is that between social network, social movement and social organisation. Here we understand networks as structures of social relations among identifiable actors. Such social networks – linking individuals and organisations – play a central role in the emergence of social movements and the orchestration of social protest (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Crossley, 2002). However, to analyse certain phenomena of social mobilisation, the concept of network has limits. For instance, in two of the cases considered below, the mobilisations around mining in the Peruvian Andes, and against the Free Trade Treaty in Ecuador, mobilisation has involved a range of actors – students, campesinos, middle classes, NGOs and activists North and South – in distinct locations across the country, and not obviously linked by social networks. These multilocal, and often transnational processes which seem to come in waves of protest are not easily explained only in terms of networks, even if networks and connections do play an important role in channeling some of the information and resources being used to motivate and sustain some of these processes.

These phenomena are what we take here to be social movements: processes of collective action, dispersed but also sustained across space and time. Or, as Ballard *et al.* (2005: 617) suggest for the South African case, social movements are "politically and/or socially directed collectives" of usually several networks and organisations that aim to change elements of the political, economic and social system. While the actors involved in these movements do not need to share exactly the same visions either of the reasons for protest or for the alternatives being sought, there does need to be a significant overlap among these visions in order to sustain the movement and give it its coherence.

In this sense, a social movement is a form of collective action, but it is not an actor in and of itself; or for Tilly (1985), movements are better understood as political campaigns than as particular types of organisations. A movement is thus a process, constituted by a group of actions and actors, in which its most important characteristic is an action motivated by

² It is worth noting that this increased interest in social movements is apparent in development writing more broadly. In part this reflects a growing disappointment with NGOs as sources of alternatives, but also the increasing interest in rights based, citizenship and other slightly more politicized approaches to understanding development intervention. Similarly social movements (or social organisations at least) appear to be of increasing interest to funding organisations.

senses of justice and injustice and by the sense – even if not explicit – of the need to build alternative ways of organising society (Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Escobar, 1995). They make visible different ideas of development. This aspect of the nature and work of social movements receives particular emphasis in post-structural readings which insist that culture – meanings, ideas, practices – is one of the most important terrains in which social movements operate, and which they seek to change (Alvarez *et al.*, 1998). Thus, for instance, social movements do not only (or even mainly) engage policy with counter-proposals for particular policy domains (for instance on poverty or social protection) but rather they challenge 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 have a seat in policy making processes (c.f. Long y Long, 1992; Alvarez *et al.*, 1998; Dagnino, 2005). In this type of analysis, social movements are best understood as the vectors of particular discourses and forms of questioning the world – and to the extent that a movement has the effect of changing ideas, assumptions and concepts of legitimate knowledge, then it has been successful.

This reflection, however, only goes so far in helping understand how movements emerge and are sustained – and here, the concepts of network and social organisation are important. First, as Crossley (2002: 93) notes, there is considerable evidence to suggest that broader processes of social movement emerge out of prior, everyday networks and practices, as well as networks among organisations that serve to amplify the concerns and discourses of these nascent social movements. Second, to the extent that movement actions and processes require financial, human, informational, social and other resources that more localised and/or informal social networks are unable to mobilise, movement processes depend greatly on formal organisations (Crossley, 2002; McAdam *et al.*, 1988; Ballard *et al.*, 2005: 627). Such resources can almost only be channeled by formal organisations, or what some social movement theorists refer to as "social movement organisations" or SMOs (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Potential SMOs might include NGOs, churches, student organisations, formal peasant or ethnic organisations, university programmes etc. Such actors play an important role in keeping movements "moving" and alive, by maintaining debates, supporting events, nurturing leaders during those periods when movement activity has slowed down, and more generally in helping produce "Melucci's submerged networks or latent social movements" (Townsend *et al.*, 2004: 871). Such organisations also play important roles in forming movement discourses, although in the process different SMOs may have distinct ideas of how movement discourse should evolve and can end up pulling a movement in somewhat different directions (c.f. McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

This focus on networks, organisations and actions helps understand *how* movements emerge and are maintained over time – the "supply" side of the movement question as Melucci (1985) calls it. It does not though help to explain the demand side question of *why* movements emerge. This requires different analyses, ones that might question the extent to which movements emerge as a result of poverty or chronic poverty. One avenue here builds on Habermas' explanation of the emergence of new social movements in industrialized contexts (1984, 1987). He suggests that one force underlying the *why* of their emergence has been the progressive "colonization of the lifeworld" of everyday being that has been one of the effects of modern forms of capitalism and welfare statism. In this process, central (or at any rate, external) institutions exercise progressively greater control over daily practices, and the market becomes present in domains of life, social interaction and meaning making in ways that were never previously the case. The types of colonisation to which Habermas might be alluding – the bureaucratization of death, the commoditization of a range of normally non-monetized social relationships, state intervention in questions of sexuality – may be less relevant to the case of social movements in developing countries, but the more general idea remains useful. The incursion of new forms of investment in rural environments, the accelerating effects of cultural modernisation on traditional practices, the liberalisation of

markets and upsetting of price bands, employment relations and more generally of the moral economy (Scott, 1976; Edelman, 2005; Ballard *et al.*, 2005) – all constitute forms of colonisation of everyday practice that are often associated with central and external institutions. In the face of this colonisation, Habermas suggests that social movements emerge as efforts to defend, and recover threatened forms of life and social organisation (a view not so different from that of Escobar, 1995: 222-226, even if the theoretical basis is quite distinct). Habermas also notes that the formal political system has ever 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).

Other authors suggest that the "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). There is an important temporal element to this argument, locating the emergence of movements within on-going changes in the structure of social relationships (around, say, class, race or gender). That is movements might emerge in response to increasing levels of inequality, abuse and coercion that derive from these structural shifts. In turn, the presence and actions of movements might serve to rework these shifts. The more general implication of these analyses of the "why" of movements is that movements are unlikely to emerge around issues of poverty *per se* (though they may emerge around rapid *impoverishment*, perhaps particularly among the previously non-poor). Rather they are likely to emerge around economic and cultural phenomena that, albeit related to the causes of poverty, are not primarily framed by the movement in terms of 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 in its broader relational context. It also means that in certain contexts (where the "supply" conditions are favorable), the processes that can serve to deepen poverty and adverse incorporation, might also serve to create the "demand" for movements contesting these same processes. The case of Argentina in recent years seems to be a clear example of this.

A second implication of the discussion is that policy cannot work with social movements because movements are processes rather than actors. Policy can aim to work with SMOs, or particular sub-groups within these movements: support with access to research, the public sphere, or the media, or in building alliances within and beyond the movement are all possibilities here. Likewise, policies that foster more enabling contexts for public debate, state-society engagement and collective action are also important sources of support, even if they would not work directly with movements. However, caution is always in order. Given that visions and interpretations within movements are not homogeneous, working with some SMOs and groups (and by necessary implication not working with others) runs the risk of elevating certain views over others and upsetting balances and accommodations that have been reached within movements. This can have the effect of weakening movements by exacerbating one of their inherent weaknesses. Some policy may of course do this deliberately, in an aim to disarticulate movements; and in other cases it is always a possible effect of direct engagement with SMOs and subsets of actors within movements.

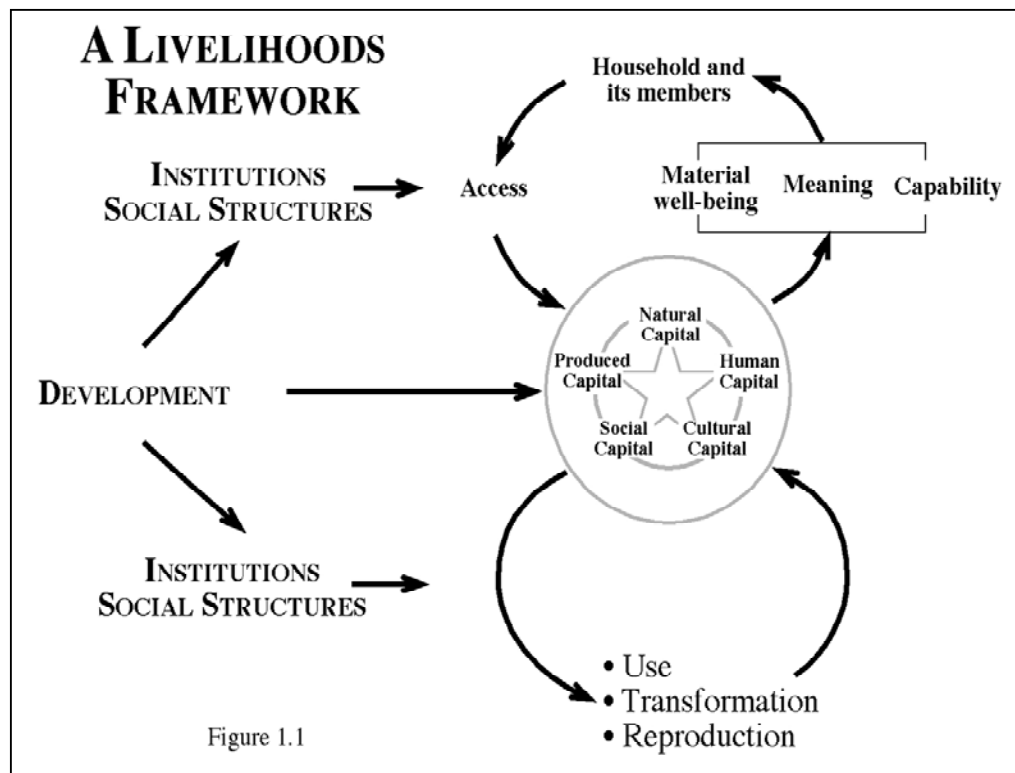
3. Chronic poverty– why social movements might matter

3.1 Social movements and chronic poverty: an expanded livelihoods framework

The distinction that Green and Hulme (2005) draw between the characteristics of poverty and its social and political causes has some resonance with another distinction that has been at play in much thinking on livelihoods: the distinction between assets on the one hand, and mediating institutions and structures on the other and it is perhaps helpful to dwell briefly on this as a means of organising our ideas regarding the possible ways in which social

movements might influence poverty. The livelihoods framework has been criticized by some for drawing too much attention to asset bases, and there is no doubt that much livelihoods work has emphasised asset counting, assessing the assets that people control and describing their livelihood and (at the very least implicitly) poverty status in terms of lacks or endowments of assets. Such approaches might be deemed to encourage poverty reduction strategies that are aimed at the symptoms of poverty rather than its causes. However, it is also the case that some livelihoods frameworks have emphasised the roles of social structures and a wide range of institutions and institutionalized relationships in underpinning the political economy that structures socially differentiated access to, use of, control of and ability to reproduce and transform assets (Figure 1). Such approaches draw attention to relational domains that can only be addressed by clearly politicized forms of social action.

Figure 1: A Livelihoods Framework



(Source: adapted from Bebbington, 2004. "Development" here is understood as both underlying, political economy processes as well as forms of intervention.)

Following the discussion above, and accepting dominant conceptions of social movements worked with in the sociological and political science literature (Alvarez *et al.*, 1998; Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Tilly, 1985; McAdam *et al.*, 2001), the implication would be that social movements emerge to address the structural, institutional and relational factors that affect livelihoods, rather than the asset bases that people mobilise in those livelihoods. In the language of Figure 1, movements thus emerge to address the institutions and social structures that affect (at the top of the diagram) people's access to, control of, and security of assets and (at the bottom of the diagram) people's ability to use, transform and reproduce those assets. Many phenomena can fall under this category of institutions and structures, some more formal and institutional, others more social and relational. The former might

include land tenure rules, subsoil ownership rights, environmental regulation standards, rules governing access to and provision of health care and education etc. The latter (which interact with the former) may include relationships of race, ethnicity, gender, region and class that also have significant implications for access, control, security, use and reproduction of resources. Such relationships can influence: who the judiciary, polity and police are more likely to defend when control over assets becomes contested; the balance of power in marketing relationships and price negotiations; the bargaining over and control of assets within the household; the relative security of tenure of different ethnic and gender groups; and so on.

What livelihoods frameworks have been less effective in doing has been to explore the ways in which these institutions and structures are embedded in broader relations of the political and cultural economy that drive the ways in which assets are distributed in society, that underpin the institutions that emerge to govern and give value to those asset distributions and the processes that drive them, and also that give meaning to these distributions and processes – that is, that help produce ways of thinking (or more frequently *not* thinking) about particular distributions, processes and relationships so that they become accepted as *normal*. This further move is important for thinking about the links between social movements and poverty because in many cases movements emerge to address these underlying processes that structure asset distribution and fix certain ideas that make such asset distributions seem societally acceptable.

As a way of thinking about the links between movements and these underlying processes, Hickey and Bracking (2005, p. 852) draw on a distinction made by David Harvey "who identifies two forms of asset distribution and governance, "accumulation by exploitation" and "accumulation by dispossession." They note that the former, workplace centered process has historically generated labour movements, trade unions, and related political organisations. 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)". So in addition to challenging particular institutions and structures, movements also emerge to challenge the underlying dynamics of the political economy.

In addition to this, these underlying dynamics, institutions, social structures and forms of governing assets and their transformation are all given meaning in societies – some become more natural, taken for granted and hegemonic than others. Challenging these meanings has been another important sphere in which social movements have acted. They have made culture a central terrain on which to do politics – a terrain in which taken for granted notions of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender are challenged, and in which the boundary of the political is expanded (Slater, 1998).

3.2 Social movements, structures, institutions and the underlying dynamics of political economy

3.2.1 Movements, accumulation and adverse incorporation

Du Toit (2004) has argued that, rather than discuss chronic poverty in terms of social exclusion it is, at least in the South African case, analytically more correct to frame it in terms of "adverse incorporation" because 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 poor people. These observations are the flip side of Harvey's (2003) two types of accumulation (by exploitation or dispossession), referring to the ways in which people become, or stay, poor because of the ways in which they and their assets are incorporated into such dynamics of accumulation. There is also a link here to Habermas' notion that movements emerge in response to ways in which lifeworlds are colonised – to the extent that such systemic dynamics of accumulation may often be experienced locally as disruptions of everyday life and livelihood.

Many forms of mobilisation and social movement have emerged to challenge processes of accumulation that occur through both 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, 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 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, 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. At certain points in his analysis he has suggested that these movements have had some influence on liberalisation processes (Edelman, 1998; 1999) though his more recent interventions are more cautious, noting an apparent demise in the movements and suggesting that, with the signing of the Central American Free Trade Area treaty, their overall effects will not have been great (Edelman, 2003, 2006). In the Andean countries, structurally similar types of alliance have also emerged to contest similar types of liberalisation treaties with the added presence of increasingly militant indigenous organisations (see below) who have led these movement processes. Indeed, the country in which such mobilisation has been most visible, Ecuador, is the one with the most consolidated set of indigenous organisations.³

A distinct, but related set of mobilisations 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 localised mobilisations of communities affected by mining in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and increasingly Central America; the emergence of transnational networks and initiatives supporting these national movements around minerals and water; and the same mixture of localised protests and transnational alliances around hydrocarbon extraction, again in Bolivia, as well as Ecuador. In these instances, movements can better be understood as responses to accumulation through dispossession (or at least, the actors involved perceive that the processes against which they are mobilising are ones of dispossession). Dispossession is perceived as taking at least three forms. One is the dispossession of land above mineral and hydrocarbon deposits, and which resource extraction industries need to control in order to operate. Here movements protest against loss of territory, forced land sales, and the low prices paid for land at the moment of sale. A second is the dispossession of the resources themselves. In the case of water, movements (especially in the Bolivian case) protested what they perceived to be the loss of a public and collective good to privatised control, and in the case of subsoil resources, the protest has been rather more about the fact that transnational capital comes to control extraction. Third, and related, is the argument that, because companies enjoy significant tax and royalty advantages at a time of rising commodity prices, they are dispossessing both localities and countries of the exchange value inherent in these resources.

³ This notwithstanding recent conflicts within and among organisations.

In such contexts, movements and movement organisations emerge in response to forms of colonisation 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 and some argue that they deepen it further precisely through resource dispossession and the damage (generally environmental) visited on the resources of poor people living in the vicinity of these activities (Bebbington *et al.*, 2006). Notably, the areas in which such resource extraction occurs are often (not always) 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 colonisation 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 polarization in the distribution of benefits, movements around resource extraction seem more likely to engage in direct and violent confrontation than do other movements – this perhaps because the issue they are addressing is so much more obviously and identifiably embodied in particular corporations and physical sites (mines) than are those more structural issues being addressed by identity based movements.

While we might approach the emergence of these 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 (cf. Perreault, 2006). These alternatives can range from complete rejection of resource extraction and these new modes of resource governance, through to demands for greater participation in decision-making regarding resource management and more equitable distribution of the economic benefits derived from resource exploitation. Some SMOs are open to deal with resource extraction companies, others not at all (and vice versa). Some prefer strategies of negotiation,⁴ others of confrontation and direct action; and so on. Often, however, they seek new ways of coupling debates on resource extraction with debates on poverty and alternative strategies for linking growth and poverty reduction (Perreault, 2006).

In these different cases, the policy 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 liberalisation 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 - 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.

3.2.2 Movements and the challenge to exclusion

While some movements can best be understood as responses to forms of accumulation and lifeworld colonisation that are perceived by activists and SMOs to be prejudicial to the interests of poor people, 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 in this respect are those identity based, gender, place, ethnic and racial movements that have been so well explored 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.

⁴ Read by some as selling out and cooptation.

Ethnic 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 in both livelihoods and chronic poverty frameworks that help produce poverty. In various countries in Latin America, organisations of various types – church-based, non-governmental, educational etc. – began to work with ethnically subordinated groups to lay the bases for creating new organisations and leadership capacities. The objectives were, precisely, to challenge these adverse terms of recognition. Over a forty-year period in countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru, this process helped support the emergence of new organisations. In earlier years these organisations were primarily place and regionally based, but with time macro-regional and national organisations have also emerged.

While concerns about poverty have been present in the ways in which these organisations and movements have presented their concerns, discourses have revolved far more around issues of rights, 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 (cf. Bebbington *et al.*, 2006) or "counter-public" (Andolina, 2003: 733) spaces in which novel debates on development, democracy and rights 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 (ibid: 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.'"

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 (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, 2005) 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 – even if it did not declare Ecuador a plurinational state, it did include 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: 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. 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, 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 implication is that, reducing exclusion may affect non-material dimensions of poverty, but 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 – and as a result, material poverty persists in its chronicity.

3.3 Social movements and the cultural politics of chronic poverty

Important bodies of literature on social movements (and civil society more broadly) have suggested that one of the most important effects of social movements – and indeed one of the reasons that they emerge – is to challenge taken-for-granted ideas in society and to make things publicly debatable and debated that were previously not. Two strands in the literature are especially relevant in this regard and though they map back onto rather distinct bodies of theory they are each helpful for teasing out links between chronic poverty and movements.

One strand of literature traces its roots to post-structuralism and this writing (most clearly expressed in Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Escobar, 1992, 1995; Alvarez *et al.*, 1998) has been especially interested in the effects of discourse on society. This writing has been concerned to show how bodies of 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 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."

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. Green and Hulme (2005: 872) thus suggest that "The 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: Green and Hulme again, referring to the specific case of the gendering of poverty, observe: "Rather, it [gendered poverty] 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" Importantly, this social casting of widows as second-class citizens, and the associated processes of asset stripping, is politically institutionalized within customary, statutory, and common law systems that license and perpetuate such processes of impoverishment" (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. But 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.*, 2006). 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 in countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia and Guatemala, that 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. In the same way, the mobilisation of these same organisations during 2006 in Ecuador, coupled with earlier efforts of these organisations and a number of NGOs has turned the signing of a Free Trade Treaty between Ecuador and the USA into a public debate on the links between trade liberalisation treaties and poverty in a way that was not the case even six months earlier.

3.4 Social movements and the assets of the chronically poor

The paper has suggested that, in general, movements have not emerged in order to have a direct impact on the assets of the poor. This observation requires two qualifiers, however. First, the one very significant exception to this in rural areas has been land, with water becoming another over time (Perreault, 2006). Second, while movements may not engage asset provision directly, SMOs within them, as part of their own organisational strategy, may well do this. We take each caveat in turn.

To begin with the first qualifier. In Latin America – from where this paper takes most of its inspiration – land conflicts mark the origin of more concerted forms of rural social mobilisation. Furthermore, while during the 1980s it seemed that rural social mobilisation, such as it was, was becoming less an issue of land and more one of territory, ethnicity and market access, over the last decade land has once again become an important base for new forms of mobilisation of landless people. This has been most clearly and popularly so for the case of the Landless People's Movement in Brazil (the MST) (Wolford, 2004 a, b; Kay, 2004), but with the relative success and visibility of the MST in Brazil, landless movements have also begun to emerge in other countries of the region.

The mobilisation for land has typically emerged in contexts of skewed land distributions and (in the past) tied labour arrangements linked to these distributions. Mobilisation 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. However, by occupying land they also challenged the social relationships that produced such skewed distributions in the first place. To the extent that these occupations became movements, and one began to see occupations occurring across different locations throughout a country, they called these agrarian structures even more into question and in many instances induced governments and modernising national elites to pass land reform policies that formalised this questioning of particular relations of land ownership. Mobilisations had the effect of challenging assumptions about acceptable agrarian structures in a way that ultimately led to policy change – if only because they sowed the idea that certain agrarian structures could generate pro-communist forms of social protest and that

these structures were therefore no longer defensible. While in many instances, these new policies did not progress very far, they did tend to address some of the most egregious labour and land relationships (de Janvry, 1981) – or, in other words, those relationships most clearly linked to the production of chronic poverty.

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, indeed, chronically poor. The MST has been perhaps the most successful in this regard. In a context of acute inequality in the ownership of land, the MST has over 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 over 230,000 land occupations, 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 3 to 28 states, and " For the first time in Brazilian history, a social movement has organised a coherent membership base in each of the country's highly differentiated geographic regions " (Wolford, 2004a: 412). The sense is that because of the MST 's scale of operation, the government has had to move on expropriations more quickly than would otherwise have been the case (Kay, 2004).

Of course, the MST does not *only* benefit the chronically poor. Members and beneficiaries of land occupations include farmers with medium sized holdings as well as landless rural workers (Wolford 2004a). Furthermore, not all poor rural people have wanted to be members of the MST (Wolford, 2004a, b), nor have they always sustained their participation over time. Wolford argues that this is largely because the way MST understands land and its significance has a very uneven resonance among different parts of the rural population, with former rural workers having quite different ideas of the importance of land from those held by peasant producers. All this notwithstanding, deeply poor rural families have benefited from the existence and land invasions of the MST. Wolford (2004a, b) talks, for instance, of the ways in which involvement in the MST helped rural workers in the North East 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.

It is also the case that the MST has not yet been able to put serious land reform policy on the agenda in Brazil, largely – says Foweraker – because during its early years, and notwithstanding broader alliances with workers' unions, it was not able to get the issue into the drafting of the constitution in 1988 (Foweraker, 2001). This cautious observation notwithstanding, however, it remains the case that at the same time as these landless movements have had most success in facilitating access to land and other assets, they do so in a way that simultaneously calls into question social structures and land tenure institutions. As such they are a sort of hybrid movement in the scheme laid out in the expanded livelihoods framework in that they both address assets directly and challenge both institutions governing land access and the societal ideas that up to then had legitimated these institutions. Indeed, this hybrid nature may be important to their success in that the possibility of access to assets can serve, in the immediate term, to attract otherwise ambivalent people to the movement (Wolford, 2004b). Then, as the movement becomes more visible, precisely because its active members grow in number, its arguments about institutions and land tenure gain further credence.

Second, while movements – understood as processes of collective action, dispersed but sustained across time and space and driven by overlapping concerns – only rarely address direct asset provision for the poor, organisations within these movements may do this far more frequently. There are many reasons for this. First, for those SMOs that operate within the world of international development, financial resources are far more easily available for

asset provisioning work than for political, advocacy or other such work that aims to change the rules of the asset provision game. Second, being involved in such direct provisioning work at the same time as advocacy and movement building, gives such organisations a particular contact with base groups that arguably improves the quality of their advocacy, and certainly gives them greater legitimacy that can also be vital in moments when other actors (government) begin repressing movements. Third, combining development and advocacy is often an explicit strategy of such SMOs, and may well be part of their mission (for instance, church organisations with a mission to minister directly to the social needs of poor people).

It is in the work of such SMOs that a more direct link with chronic poverty can be found – and this is the same link that much of the literature on NGOs, CBOs, poverty and livelihood has already addressed so it will not be rehearsed again here. What is important to note, though, is that such work can also be important as a testing and experimental ground for ideas that movements can then take up in the proposal (as opposed to protest) part of their agenda. Also important to reflect on – and with the land issue still in mind - is the extent to which such direct asset provisioning work implicitly or effectively questions social structures governing the distribution of and access to assets at the same time as directly providing assets for particularly poor groups. Thus, for instance, some SMOs have worked in education with explicitly Freirean methodologies that aim to promote in the minds of the "students" a critical approach to existing social relationships – thus calling them into question, if not in the more general public sphere (as waves of land invasions or mining protests have done) then at least in the more local sphere. A second link between provisioning and challenging social relationships can also come with the ways in which provisioning occurs. Thus, to take the case of land again, some organisations that at times play the role of SMOs have in their more developmental work experimented with credit for land purchase programmes, which have been sufficiently successful that they contribute to putting land reform (albeit through market-based and credit mechanisms) back on the policy agenda.⁵ Or as a second type of example, organisations have also worked on water provision but using forms of system governance that call into question the ways in which irrigation is traditionally governed. And finally, some SMOs – regardless of the assets on which they are working – follow processes of participatory planning that also have the effect of calling into question far broader relations that determine decision making for public investment (Bebbington *et al.*, 2006). Here the well-worn (tired?) example of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre has some relevance because, according to some readings, this municipal and then (patchily) national change in the social relationships governing municipal investment traces its origins to local NGO experiments with participatory planning in the city (Valenzuela, personal communication, 2004; Navarro, 2005), experiments which *inter alia* called into question existing systems and practices.

3.5 Caveats on social movements and chronic poverty

Writing on social movements is often normative, with a related tendency to celebrate the potential of movements to transform society as well as the role they play in making the political dimensions of development that much more visible. Yet movements suffer many constraints – some of these will be discussed in the section on policy – here we refer specifically to the limitations on their ability to affect chronic poverty. Among these the problems of representation and internal democracy within movements are some of the most serious, and relevant for this paper. 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 organisations – namely that the poor, and especially the very poor, lack time and resources to participate in mobilisations; and also lack capacities to make their voices heard in the debates and arguments that lead, ultimately, to the formation of movement discourses. Movements, thus, become captured by, or at the very least give most

⁵ For example, the NGO FEPP (Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio) in Ecuador.

voice to, some interests more than others. For instance, two studies of one of the most celebrated, South-based anti-globalisations mobilisations – the water movement in Cochabamba, Bolivia, that contested the privatisation 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: 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."

In a quite different context – South Asia and the destitute – Harriss-White (2005) expresses a similar set of concerns. "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). This tendency of movements to exclude the very poorest may, Hickey and Bracking (2005: 861) suggest, be more general. 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 SMOs within social movements might be to serve as a guard not only not the "iron law of the oligarchy" (Fox, 1989) though this is important, but rather the iron law of 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.

Problems of internal representation may not only be due to such "iron laws." It may also be that the social base of a movement may have a range of concerns all of which the movement cannot address, and some of which its leadership and organic intellectuals may not even perceive. To return to Woford's (2004b) analysis of the MST, she suggests that while its view of the relationship between land, rural social change and development resonated with some of the rural poor, it had less resonance with those who had previously been rural proletarians. As a result, its bases are stronger in some regions than others, and with some rural populations than others. The difficulty that rural movements face in responding to divergent needs of their bases is an old chestnut (e.g. Bebbington, 1996) and opens up a particular weakness for them – because it is always possible for their opponents to say (with some reason) that they are not representative of particular social sectors. In practice, this uneven representation of different sub-groups within movements is hardly surprising (and no different from the challenge of representation in political parties). Indeed, it is almost inevitable. It is, however, a chronic structural problem for movements.

A second caveat, related to this, regards the role of alliances within movements. The likelihood that movements will affect policy and deeply-seated social structures depends greatly on the extent to which, within the movement process, alliances form that cut across social differences: urban/rural, ethnic, economic interests, class etc. One of the reasons for the success of the civil rights movement in influencing poverty programmes in the US South, for instance, seemed to relate to the extent to which they were able to enroll white elites (Andrews, 2001). Likewise, in the case of the mining movements discussed above, the more successful have been those which have been able to bridge urban/rural and ethnic divisions.

4. Social movements, policy and the developmental, poverty reducing state

"[I]n the NW England where we are based, 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. The constitution of an effective welfare system was more not a side effect of economic growth or a poverty alleviation or reduction programme. It created new social institutions for the prevention of poverty effects through the establishment of state structures with a responsibility to prevent poverty outcomes. At one and the same time, it was a product of changing social relations and a driver that changed social relations"

(Green and Hulme, 2005: 876).

If the state, and state policy, is ultimately this important to chronic poverty reduction, then what do social movements do about the state? While social movement arguments are often directed at society and culture, they generally cannot get away from the state. Whether the goal is to change constitutions, land laws, mining regulations, free trade deals these are all changes that can only be achieved through the state.

The state often seems to be viewed by movements as simultaneously the proximate source of problems and of solutions. Devising strategies to engage such a state challenges movements and frequently causes debates and arguments within them. This theme recurs across the literature: whether discussing 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). 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: 629).

Some of these different views reflect cultural and political differences among distinct SMOs within movements. Thus Lucero notes "[w]ithin 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 "*gubernista*" (pro-government) and willing to go to the negotiating table when highland actors are more likely to take to the streets. As we will see the same tension exists in Bolivia...." But the different strategies also reflect particular responses to the political moment: thus the transition to democracy in South Africa created more spaces for possible 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) also differ on the appropriateness and effectiveness of different strategies. Andrews (2001), discussing the effects of social movements on poverty programmes in the US South of the 1960s, concludes that movements were most effective when they built different organisations that among them allowed an oscillation between outright protest on the one hand and negotiation on the other, depending on the political moment. Thus, the nature and distribution of war on poverty programmes in the 1960s were influenced by civil rights movement's militancy. The threat of the movement led white politicians in the South to embrace certain programmes to which they were initially opposed. However, it was also the case that, by carving out and controlling administrative spaces within these programmes – i.e. by participating directly in their administration - movements had a positive influence on the amount of funding made available. Barrientos (2005) makes a somewhat similar point when he suggests that the origins of now national non-contributory

pensions programmes in Brazil, can be found in a government response to increasing levels of social mobilisation in the countryside.

In other 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. While not all forms of direct action elicit response, those whose resonance can be amplified internationally (back to financial and product markets) through the transnational networks in which movements are embedded, those that seriously complicate on-going production and those that catch companies completely by surprise do seem to have led to changes in company practices. 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.*, 2006).

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, very favourably, 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. Through its conception of the poor and social change, and its commitment to non-party alignment, the Alliance is working with symptoms of poverty, in that it is not engaged in radical long-term structural changes in the control of builders and developers over resource distribution in Mumbai. The Alliance is challenging the terms of engagement with authorities, but not the control over urban planning and development that these authorities have." He goes on to say, "the Alliance is beginning to make substantial gains in Mumbai for the poor, and I would argue that their "realpolitik" (Appadurai 2002:29) represents a more plausible general approach for poverty alleviation than the more oppositional approaches of some other NGOs in the city" (ibid: 911).

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. Much of this is a consequence, he argues, of the neoliberal context rather than negotiation *per se*: "the neoliberal approach appears to preclude popular aspirations to the achievement of greater social justice through social development" (ibid: 850). While there are many reasons for this, of particular importance is the fact that the livelihood crises triggered by neoliberalism have increasingly led movements that initially emerged around justice and citizenship issues to ask for specific hand outs 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: 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: 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 organisations – end up doing reasonably well in facilitating access to benefits, but they fail to influence policy design.

5. Conclusions

Discussions of chronic poverty have emphasised the extent to which 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 asset-less-ness. Understood as such, processes of social mobilisation become central to any discussion of chronic poverty because they are vehicles through which such relationships are argued over in society and potentially changed. Those processes of mobilisation, however, must themselves be analysed in the context of these same social relationships – in order to understand the forms that they take, and the conditions under which they do and do not emerge. This paper has suggested that these forms of mobilisation must be understood both in terms of the conditions that create a "demand" for mobilisation and the social and organisational precursors that make mobilisation possible and that pattern the forms that it subsequently takes.

A review of the literature suggests that movements rarely work directly on poverty, nor do they emerge simply because poverty exists. Instead, they emerge to attack social systems, one of whose effects is to produce poverty (or, at the very least, to allow it to continue existing in often egregious forms). In this sense their terrain of action is more political: challenging ideas, assumptions, dominant practices and stereotypes. They are about contention. In this sense, they politicize discussions of development, and more specifically of poverty. Their existence and strategies emphasise what chronic poverty authors have also tried to say – that the drivers of such poverty are primarily socio-political, and that it must be understood primarily as a product of adverse incorporation and social exclusion.

Indeed, the work of many such movements can be understood as targeting these relationships of exclusion and incorporation. The paper has suggested various ways in which this is so, at the same time as suggesting that different movements have had important impacts in these domains. In some cases they have had these effects through their influence on dominant ideas about rights, entitlements, race, gender, progress and the good society. In other cases, they have had such effects because of the ways in which they both threaten and convince. Frequently movements threaten (deliberately or not) violence, legal action or the scaling up of forms of protest that complicate the lives and livelihoods of others (elites included).

At the same time movements suffer many weaknesses – of internal difference, uneven representation, a tendency towards capture by certain sub-groups and so on. Furthermore, those actors with which they enter into contention consciously exploit these weaknesses and there are as many cases of movements that have withered away as of movements that have been instrumental in changing the institutions and ideas of a society.

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.

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: 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 subsidizing civil society organisations themselves appears to remain sound." What might this mean in practice? First, the temptation for elites and governments to weaken, delegitimize,

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's 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 in to, government.⁶

⁶ Thus it is that in contemporary Bolivia, many suggest that if the MAS government 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 radicalization 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.

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