

What kind of social protection for what kind of democracy? The dilemmas of social inclusion in Latin America

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Introduction

It is very moving to be part of this celebration of 25th anniversary of ALAMES, the Latin American Association of Social Medicine. These many years have been filled with dreams, struggles, warmth and emotion, debates, disappointments, and hopes. Over this time we have aged and some of our dearest colleagues have passed away. Others left us. At times we grew disheartened; at others we were unable to see beyond our dogmatic positions and understand the need for change. But we regrouped, caught up with what was going on in the world, learned new things, added new partners, and built new strategies.

Our vitality arises from the very choices that define the field of social medicine. Collective Health (as it is called in its Brazilian version) examines the interrelation between the biological and social orders, in other words, the concrete, historical associations of social determinants which affect living beings and how they relate to each other. We see the “social” as a field of inquiry which combines knowledge and action, both the study and practice of social transformation.

Our militancy gave rise to a social movement which from the beginning was internationalist, and more particularly, Latin American. A number of contemporary factors may have contributed to ALAMES’ character as a supranational movement: the common struggle against

dictatorships, the travels of political exiles, and the existence of charismatic figures who brought us together (Juan César, Giovanni Berlinguer, Mario Testa, Sergio Arouca, among many others). We should also remember the institutions whose support allowed us to generate and spread our ideas, such the Pan American Health Organization, and – at a national level – the Masters programs in Social Medicine at the Metropolitan Autonomous University at Xochimilco in Mexico, at the Rio de Janeiro State University, and at the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ) National School of Public Health in Brazil. Also crucial for the survival of this movement were clandestine left-wing parties and those institutions which were created as part of a strategy to consolidate social medicine/collective health and foster transformative political practice. These would include the Brazilian Center for Health Studies (CEBES) and the Brazilian Association of Collective Health (ABRASCO) and, regionally, ALAMES itself.

During the transition periods of constructing democracies, we took on the burdens of managing inequitable, exclusivist health systems while working towards an inclusive public sphere and a comprehensive, universal system. While this generated tensions within the health movement which can still be felt today, it also allowed an accumulation of expertise on the workings of the public sector and its relation to the market, as well as in the administrative and political processes involved in formulating and implementing social policy. Thanks to this accumulated experience, we can today ask questions which were previously unimaginable.

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This trajectory took us from struggling against the authoritarian, exclusivist State to working within transitional governments, even taking up leadership positions. In the ongoing work of building a democracy, we needed to revise our concept of State. This meant abandoning the Marxist-functionalist conception of the state which understood public policies only within the dualistic framework of “legitimization *versus* accumulation.” We needed to see the state strategically as an arena for struggle.

Moreover, it also required translating our political vision of transforming health into a concrete reformist project. We needed to put forth a reform proposal which, while preserving the ideals of solidarity and struggle against social exclusion as principles and strategic guidelines, could be translated into specific public policies which would prove feasible in an adverse context. In concrete terms, the democratization of health meant enshrining universal access in the constitution as a citizen’s right. This had to be accomplished at a time when neoliberalism was the dominant ideology, the political culture remained exclusivist and elitist, and the national governments, faced with structural adjustment policies and large foreign debts, were financially weak.

From being sharp critics of the state machinery and of exclusivist policies generated during authoritarian periods, many of us now had the difficult job of defending a precarious statehood in the face of radical projects for dismantling social policies in Latin America. Particularly at risk were those policies identified with prior populist periods and which had privileged more organized groupings. This involved a huge effort refining a strategic vision^a which would enable a universal reform project to go forward from within stratified, exclusivist state machinery while trying to prevent liberal greed from targeting social policy and leaving the social needs of the middle classes to the private market. This was not an easy time for us. We

^a This debate was well documented in the controversy, involving Jaime Oliveira, Gastão Wagner, and Sonia Fleury on the theory, strategy, and tactics of health reform built on the progressive democratization of social policies. See Fleury, S., Bahia, L and Amarante, P – Saúde em Debate, fundamentos da Reforma Sanitária, Cebes, 2008.

watched as some joined in the plans to privatize and target social policies, while others ended up believing that even a poor welfare state was worth defending.

For all these reasons I think it opportune that as we celebrate 25 years of ALAMES and thus reaffirm our commitment to the struggle for the democratization of health in Latin America, we should reflect on both the type of social protection we seek as well as the type of democracy we want to defend. We need to grasp the complexity of our situation. At a moment when neoliberal thinking has lost momentum both regionally and internationally, it seems paradoxical that neoliberal social policies continue to prevail even in governments that have once more adopted the vocabulary of socialism. We also see this contradiction between words and deeds in the economy. The interests of global financial capital continue to dominate the emerging economies which rely on an extremely fragile productive base which is mostly export-oriented.

The political élites feel threatened by the existence of more populist democratic governments which seek to reduce impunity and privilege while adopting redistributive measures. Despite this, we still see what O’Donnell (2002) has characterized as “low intensity democracies”; these are states in which “gray areas” of the national territory exist where the government has no presence, levels of inequity are high, and social exclusion is ubiquitous. Attempts to change this situation in favor of more inclusive public policies and an increase in the state’s capacity for market regulation and redistribution of income have been seen as threatening the fragile institutional democracy. Moreover, these efforts to transform and recover national sovereignty have not been backed up by new economic and social policies which would create an inclusive, sustainable model of development, increasing technological integration and employment without threatening environmental destruction.

The compatibility of the capitalist state with democracy and the radicalization of democracy against capitalism

Marxists have seen the capitalist state as a political entity which expresses relations of class

domination. By contrast, Weber defined the state as an institution which exercises a legitimate domination of a rational-legal nature via a bureaucratic model of administration. For many years these views were considered as mutually exclusive polar opposites. In his last work "State, Power, Socialism", Poulantzas's (1991) made a decisive contribution in the reconciliation of these two theoretical traditions by seeking to avoid reducing the state structure to a pact of domination and manifestation of state power or to a politicized institutional structure.

Contemporary Marxism's conception of the state begins with Gramsci's break with the Hegelian distinction between state and civil society, a distinction adopted by Marx, although in an inverted fashion. For Gramsci (1980), "*the State is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the consent of those over whom it rules.*"

The State, beyond its repressive duties as guardian of a hierarchical society, also plays a fundamental pedagogical role in the construction, consolidation, and reproduction of the cultural dominance of the hegemonic class. The standardizing role of the law is precisely what enables the creation of social conformism. The ethical state must elevate the masses through public policies to a cultural level appropriate to the stage of development of the forces of production. The state therefore plays an essential role in civilizing the population despite simultaneously being involved in the expansion of class hegemony.

Gramsci contrasted Eastern societies – where the state is dominant – to Western societies where a cohesive civil society is preponderant. This led him to link his understanding of the state with a strategy of transition. He held that a war of movement, or frontal attack, would only be successful in societies where the State dominates society. Trench warfare or a war of attrition, on the other hand, would be appropriate for more complex civil societies, where it would be necessary to establish hegemony before taking power.

The recovery of the State as a strategic field of battle was also highlighted by Poulantzas (1991) when he stated that political struggles are not

external to the state in terms of institutional structure; on the contrary, they are inscribed within its framework, allowing the state to take on an organic role in political struggle as a unifying factor of domination. This conception of the state allows us to see beyond its machinery and institutions and appreciate it as a field on which struggles take place. Power is expressed in the creation and interaction of alliances within the state; these alliances struggle with each other, establishing hierarchies. Hence the inherent fragmentation of the capitalist state is not an expression of political disunity. On the contrary this fragmentation makes unity possible while assuring the state a relative autonomy. The state, through its politics, forms, and structures, does not express the interests of the dominant class in a mechanical way. The balance of power within the state provides a condensed reflection of the ongoing class struggle outside of it.

However, when we seek to represent the interests of the oppressed within in state entities, we must bear in mind Offe's description (1984:145) of the *structural selectivity of the state*. Offe explains how popular demands, even though accepted within the administrative machinery, are stripped of their political content through the stifling processes of state bureaucracy. This process allows the system to preserve its legitimacy yet remain within the limits of the system of accumulation.

Our application of these theoretical concepts to explain the Brazilian situation led to a series of studies on public policies. By analyzing the factors underlying the evolution of these policies, we sought to reveal the mechanisms responsible for creating a unique Brazilian state. Understanding the balance of power which materialized during the socio-political process of construction of the state and, therefore, the political significance behind public policies represented a huge step forward in the Left's thinking in terms of the process of statebuilding and sectorial politics. We could understand how popular struggles were taken up within the structure of the state, seen not so much as a monolith but rather as the condensed representation of interplaying forces, yet preserving the political perspectives and objectives of the dominant classes. We could identify those social conquests where, in a

democratic setting, it had been possible to change the correlation of forces thanks to increased social mobilization. This happened despite the cooptation of popular leaders. Understanding this, we could examine the importance of the state as a mechanism for institutionalizing the achievements of popular struggles.

In his last work Poulantzas (1980) discusses the relations between state, power, and socialism. He begins with the need to find a democratic path to socialism and construct a democratic socialism by radically transforming the state. This requires broadening and deepening the institutions of representative democracy and the expansion of freedoms (won by the popular masses) with the development of forms of direct grassroots democracy and the proliferation of local areas of self-government (1980:293).

The difficulty resides in finding a democratic way of creating a democratic socialism. This path must be democratic and it must involve struggles fought both inside and outside of the state's strategic field, while avoiding the trap of mere reformism, that is, of continued and progressive state transformation which ends up preserving the conditions of dominance, albeit in an updated form.

The struggle for power within the state must always be differentiated from simply holding high government offices and implementing progressive reforms which are not truly transformative. The struggle for socialism, even within the state, is marked by its capacity to produce actual breaks in the balance of power, shifting it towards the popular masses. This demands permanent engagement with the struggles of a broad social movement for the transformation of representative democracy.

The viability of a democratic road to socialism and of its goals, and the avoidance of the twin dangers of statism and the impasse of social democracy ... presupposes the continuous support of a mass movement founded on broad popular alliances. If such a movement – as opposed to mere passive revolution – is not deployed and active, if the Left does not succeed in creating one, then nothing will prevent social-democratization of the experience: however radical they may be, the various programs will change little of

importance. This broad popular movement constitutes a guarantee against the reaction of the enemy, even though it is not sufficient and must always be linked to sweeping transformations of the state (Poulantzas, 1980:299).

We need to move away from the reduction of the socialist ideal to the prospect efficiently managing capitalism within a social democracy. We can only do this by understanding that capitalism is not our predetermined end, but rather one stage in a historical process full of contradictions. These contradictions take on a special character in the development of citizenship and of social and collective rights.

The concept of citizenship is seen as the core theoretical and strategic element explaining the evolution of social policies. The state's expectation of obedience is not based exclusively – nor primarily – on its monopoly on violence. Rather obedience is founded on its capacity to gain consensus and on the legitimacy it has won within society. Mediating elements are necessary not only for the construction of hegemony in the expansion of interests of the dominant class, but also in expanding the state itself. The grounds for separating politics from the economy ultimately dissolve with the introduction of the social sphere.

Capitalism needs the concept of *citizens* since this category gives legal and political standing to the concept of free workers able to sell their labor. Citizenship as an abstract concept is necessary for the constitution, justification, and legitimacy of political power in capitalist societies. While it recognizes the autonomy and freedom of individuals it completely denies the existence of collective actors and social classes, each with contradictory and conflicting interests. Citizenship therefore constitutes an essential element in the construction of the liberal ideology of the state as representative of the collective will. However, citizenship has to be seen as a great achievement in the struggle of the oppressed classes; it creates a public sphere founded on the idea of equality among citizens, distancing itself from traditional authoritarian conceptions based on inequalities and social hierarchies. We can thus consider the modern state, guarantor of this political equality, as an

“expression of class domination, but also a moment of legal and political balance, a moment of mediation” (Gruppi, 1980:31).

Attempts have been made to conceptualize citizenship and the foundation of social policies, outside of their original liberal framework (Fleury, 1994):

- Citizenship is a legal-political construct suited to the needs of the capitalist state and a necessary (if insufficient) mediator explaining the genesis of social policies;
- Social policy is the state’s management of labor power and its reproduction within the possibilities and limitations imposed by the dynamics of capitalist accumulation;
- Social policies, by acting through a network of micro-powers, participate in social reproduction and construction of hegemony;
- The way in which the correlation of social forces appears with a state structure – political, administrative, service providing – will depend on the organization framework of that state structure;
- Social policies undergo historical development which reveals the contradiction between socialized production and private appropriation, even when the separation of politics from the economy has been irreversibly altered.

Just like formal democracy, with its institutional framework, citizenship is a construct or legal possibility offering no guarantee that it will be realized in fact. Both democracy and citizenship offer real possibilities because they make possible the reconciliation between democracy and capitalism by providing political recognition of the stark contradiction between the egalitarian status of citizens and the economic gaps between social classes. The state – by incorporating social demands – became something more than just a coercive tax-collecting machine; it has a history of development driven by struggles for power.

According to Wood (1995:184):

The separation of civic status and class position in capitalist societies has two sides: on the one hand, the right of citizenship is not determined by socioeconomic position – and

in this sense, capitalism can coexist with formal democracy – on the other hand, since the power of capitalism to appropriate workers’ excess labor does not depend on any privileged legal or civil status, civic equality does not directly affect class inequality, and formal democracy leaves class exploitation fundamentally intact.

The reconciliation between capitalism and democracy, mediated by the concept of citizenship, must also include the possibility of radicalizing democracy when new political forces appear. In other words, we must go beyond thinking of citizenship as a set of rights and reclaim it as an egalitarian legal-political imagery. This opens up a new front in our struggle – the modernization of social rights and an expansion of their content – and raises questions ranging from bureaucratic standardization to the construction of emancipatory identities. The path to democracy thus involves the construction of new subjects and their engagement with social movements; this process basically happens when citizen demands go unfulfilled by the state in capitalist democracies.

Coordinating a two-pronged struggle – both within and outside the state – is no easy matter. It requires the capacity to develop, strengthen, and coordinate diffuse centers of resistance, be they inside or outside the institutional machinery of the state. The Foucauldian idea that *“where there is power, there is resistance”* led Laclau and Mouffe (2001) to research the varied forms of resistance and the conditions under which these assume a political quality. They criticized the Jacobean side of Marxism with its *“postulation of one foundational moment of rupture and of a unique space in which the political is constituted.”* They reject the idea of a signal point of rupture and accept the plurality and indetermination of the social. Politics cannot be located at one particular level of the social, since its subject matter is the very mediation of conflicting relations. Laclau and Mouffe (2001:154) formulate the thesis that *“antagonism emerges only to the extent that subordination is subverted.”* The function of social movements is to use the framework of democracy as a way of reinterpreting relations of subordination as

relations of oppression; this prevents oppression from becoming established in the forms of subordination. Social movements must also denounce the subordination which occurs when acquired rights are denied in practice.

The question remains of who can contribute to this emancipatory project. Aspects of modernization – such as the social division of labor, increasing functional specialization, the advance of democracy (which allows the construction of new identities), antagonisms created by new conflicts, and the power of the mass media – have had a profound effect on the processes of subjectification. The unitary vision of the proletariat has been replaced by a kaleidoscope of subjects in a polyphonic political space which is inevitably both more plural and less well defined.

Democracy can only be radicalized through new political subjects who will subvert their subordinate position. The rupture, therefore, occurs at the very moment when individuals become political subjects, provided they subvert their subordinated position. To become a political subject must be understood as an affirmation of their freedom and awareness within a framework which was not of their choosing. It is within this tension between social determination and the assertion of individual and group freedom that we see the process of individuals becoming political subjects. (Fleury, 2009)

This process, grounded in the dynamics of social life, cannot occur unless we accept the state as a strategic field of battle. However, we do not wish to suggest that the democratic social mediation of citizenship is an emancipatory process. We cannot construct political subjects in an administrative fashion. Nor can we ignore that just because popular struggles come to occupy certain positions within the state this does not mean they break with the structural selectivity of public policies.

Citizenship is limited as a tool when we consider expanding democracy beyond the political sphere. It is only recently, for instance, that family relations became subordinate to citizenship rights. By contrast, relations within capitalist production are barely even subject to labor law. There is no discussion of increasing democracy in management or of participation within the enterprise.

Boaventura de Sousa (1994) finds the principle of subjectivity to be much broader than the principle of citizenship. Citizenship enriches subjectivity. By establishing a universal set of rights and duties, democracy offers additional possibilities for the creation of political subjects. But citizenship also clashes with the difference in subjectivity and autonomy which mark the identity of the subject.

Many authors have commented on the liberal reduction of citizenship to its civil and political components and the restriction of democracy to what is compatible with capitalism: political pluralism, institutions guaranteeing the constitutional order, and the alternation of power between disputing factions. These criticisms run from the classic polyarchy of Dahl to more recent studies by O'Donnell. For *social democracy* the goal is to combine the institutional framework of democracy with conflict resolution favoring social justice, thus bringing significant advances in the social dimension of citizenship. Within this project the workers' movement becomes an active subject only when it is question of reconciling democracy and capitalism (Przeworski, 1989; Genro, 2008; Mészáros, 2006). The workers' movement is a political actor when it operates within the structure of the capitalist system and is legally constituted and regulated by the State. According to Mészáros (2006:91), this state of affairs is a historically limited phenomena; "*the development of the Welfare State was the final manifestation of this [process] and was only viable in a limited number of countries.*"

Reconciling democracy and socialism requires that the process of autonomous self-construction by oppressed subjects – and we now speak of a plurality of subjects – be radicalized through the struggle to reconcile the universality of citizenship with the uniqueness of social identities. Although this is a political struggle, the element of economic transformation cannot be ignored. As Wood (1995:242) states: the "*reintegration of the 'economic' into the political life of the community begins with the subordination of the economy to the democratic self-determination of the producers themselves.*"

However, the way to implement this strategy is not clear. Faced with the structural crisis of capitalism and neoliberal hegemony, the Left has

yet to offer a consistent formulation regarding the construction of socialism,

However, we can see pieces of that strategy being implemented in specific fields, such as health and social policy, or in the new power blocs among the democratic governments in Latin America. The potentials offered by this expansion of the public sphere and the creation of new political blocs demand a new model of democracy, which should go beyond merely broadening representative democracy. We must move towards a model of deliberative democracy and a reconstruction of the state in which previously excluded interests would be included in a process of co-management.

It is our view that the construction of democracy in the region opens the door for a fifth generation of rights (beyond civil, political, social, and environmental rights) in response to the demand for deliberative management of public policies, in particular of social policies (Fleury, 2003).

Here we differ from those who see social rights solely as the result of the expansion of civil and political rights. As we see it, in Latin America the struggle for social rights structures the identities of political actors, transforms State institutions, and creates innovative democratic institutions, particularly at local level.

The current moment is characterized by the search for new institutional arrangements for democratic expression which respect the three principles of recognition, participation, and redistribution (Fraser, 2001). From the interaction between social and institutional innovation a new framework for democracy can be created which is capable of recognizing “the other”, including all citizens in a political community, encouraging active participation, and resisting all forms of exclusion. Ultimately, in addition to new political actors and a new institutional framework, democracy requires that the principle of social justice should be uppermost. The deliberative model is a substantive notion of democracy, not merely a procedural one, and it includes values such as egalitarianism and social justice. The process of making decisions is not simply a question of choosing among alternatives. It involves generating new options, building collective identities and fostering social innovation.

Socioeconomic inequalities are the product of a long tradition of an authoritarian and exclusive political culture. Reconciliation between democracy and social exclusion is possible when we restrict the definition of democracy to a process involving regular, institutionalized, (relatively) free elections for the main government posts. Within this framework, participatory rights are equated with the structures of representative democracy. Only the radicalization of democracy, with the inclusion of those who were isolated from power in an open, institutionalized interplay of negotiation and/or deliberation, can break the vicious circle of politics, marked by alienation of citizens, the lack of accountability on the part of representatives, and bureaucratic authoritarianism.

Models of deliberative democracy do not reject the state; on the contrary, they recognize the need to radically transform its institutional machinery allowing the interests of the dominated to be included in the agenda of public policy. This is achieved through the simultaneous processes of transforming the institutional framework and constructing collective identities.

The radicalization of democracy through the combination of representative democracy and deliberative democracy is not without its contradictions and illusions. The contradictions exist because we want to simultaneously occupy institutional spaces and mobilize civil society.

However, we need to recognize that parliamentary participation by popular and workers’ parties is limited by capital’s control over the parliamentary process and, increasingly, by the interrelation between political control and control over mass media. It is therefore only through the combination of parliamentary representation and the other activities associated with organized civil society that it will prove possible to increase civil society’s power.

Wood (2006:211) warns us about the distortion of the idea of civil society and forms of participation when she states:

To counteract the hegemonic logic of capitalism, it is not enough merely to indicate the plurality of social identities and social relations. The class relation that constitutes capitalism is not, after all, just a personal identity, nor even just a principle of

'stratification' or inequality. It is not only a specific system of power relations but also the core relation of a distinctive social process: the dynamic of accumulation and the self-expansion of capital.

Although it is justified to denounce attempts at dissolving the dominance of capital in a diffuse set of struggles for identities and power relations, it is also true that it is through these struggles and identities that people create a collective proposal for social transformation.

In societies, like those of Latin America, where workers in the formal sector make up a group which is privileged by public policies, they have no engagement in solidarity with other excluded sectors. It would be an illusion to expect that the response to oppression and exploitation would arise primarily as a conflict between capital and labor. In Oliveira's critical analysis (2006:37) we find the material bases for this process of non-inclusive corporatism:

But the marginalization of class structure under the new political regime was not simply the result of the devastation caused by deregulation. The restructured production processes are internalized and give rise to a new form of subjectivity, inculcating values of individual competition. Workers are confronted with new production processes that corrode their sense of class identity in this precarious peripheral Fordism.

Alongside this transformation in the material bases and the subjectivity of the working class, we see a huge contingent of casual workers who are always excluded from the benefits of social policies. We see therefore that possibilities of democratization are intrinsically linked to the inclusion of this contingent of the dispossessed in the public sphere of citizenship. The regional challenge for participatory democracy is rooted in this situation. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, collective demands arise for the recognition of these excluded groups as political actors, for redistributive policies, and for alternative forms of joint management between state and society.

However, various experiences of participation in the control and joint management of social policy demonstrate that they cannot be taken as

the unequivocal route to transformation. These experiences reveal constraints and fragilities such as: segmentation and fragmentation of participation into different political spheres with resulting specialization, dispersion and loss of power; restrictions on participation in matters affecting economics and the dynamics of capital reproduction, limiting participation to social policies (Moroni, 2009); appropriation of these participatory structures by corporate groups; the emergence of patronage (Labra, 2009, Côrtes, 2009); and inequity in participation (Yong, 2001, Fraser, 2001, Fedozzi, 2009); among others.

Nonetheless many positive aspects are recognized in these studies and those of other authors, bearing in mind that social participation involves the challenges of constructing particular identities while also accepting the universality of the "other." These efforts must promote innovative social practices (Avritzer, 2009) which introduce new possibilities of challenging the violation and denial of citizens' rights (Honneth, 2003). On another occasion I stated that

... the core issue of governability in Latin America is the paradoxical coexistence of a legal and political order based on the principle of basic equality among citizens and the simultaneous preservation of the highest level of inequality regarding access to the distribution of wealth and public goods. The loss of legitimacy of the social pact and of the traditional actors associated with the developmentalist state requires a new power sharing agreement. This must take into account those transformations which came about with the recent consolidation of the social fabric and fully incorporate those who are currently excluded. However, the possibilities of establishing strategies to institutionalize power and social cohesion are limited by the contemporary reduction in the state's power and by the entry of these societies into a globalized economy, deepening the economy/politics, state/nation duality (Fleury, 2003).

Democratic governments installed in the region over the past 25 years have attempted to face the challenges of reaching sustainable levels of governability by seeking solutions to the

problems of inequality and social exclusion. Authors such as Lanzaro (2008) and Roberts (2008) identify as an absolute novelty the current existence of social democratic governments which attempt to maintain the compromise between capitalism and democracy in pursuit of a new form of development combining economic progress with social cohesion. Roberts, meanwhile, points to the weakness of these social democratic governments when it comes to building a robust alternative to the model of neoliberal development. These new governments maintain orthodox macroeconomic politics and are restricted by the pressures of the global market; they cannot develop the type of industrial policy and corporate negotiation which marked European social democracy. Lanzaro (2008:41) identifies as the core feature of Latin American social democratic governments what he calls the institutional Left, the existence of a leftwing party committed to electoral competition and to the democratic regimes. Brazil, Chile and Uruguay are examples. According to him, the wave of leftwing governments also shows other tendencies, such as populist governments (Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador) and popular national governments (Argentina and possibly Panama).

Both authors agree that not all leftwing governments in the region have the institutional requirements needed for the construction of social democracy. These requirements would include respect for liberal democracy and individual freedoms, a commitment to competitive elections, political pluralism, and social citizenship. Leftwing governments which arise from a strong social reaction to neoliberalism are often led by new movements and social actors – Indians, activists, and the urban poor – and end up creating governments identified by these authors as populist. The legitimacy of these governments is not based on the institutions of formal democracy since the traditional party system has been discredited and has not been replaced by any other party-based organization.

The disconnection between participation and institutionalization raised by Dahl (1991) in his study of development of political systems is renewed in Latin America. Political analysts see attempts to foster participation as being populist and destabilizing, even while they accept that it

enriches the social component of democracy. Institutionalization, although conducive of greater stability, has proved unable to break with the interests of those sectors which have traditionally dominated Latin American societies, generating frustration among the more radical members of political coalitions. Despite their differences, both alternatives seem unable to harmonize economic and social progress; this is evidence of the limitations of commodity-exporting economies in terms of generating a sustainable development project.

Ramírez (2009) divides the region into four political models, depending on how they deal with the social question and popular participation: the neoliberal societies (such as Mexico and most Central American countries); the social liberal societies (Brazil and Uruguay); the (neo)developmentalist societies (for example, Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Uruguay) and the societies of participatory government or new socialism. The latter model – still in process of creation – offers the possibility of a revival of the state – also a feature of neo-development-alism – combined with a prominent role for social participation by the most disadvantaged sectors, along with the creation of a new framework for power relations which effectively guides both state and market. Trujillo (2009) traces the way in which the Ecuadorean Constitution reconceptualized social participation. Originally, a right of individuals, participation has now been institutionalized in new legislation as a control over representative democracy and part of the development of public policies. Furthermore, in what is an innovation, the Ecuadorean Constitution defines participation as the fourth power of the State, institutionalizing the function of transparency and social control.

However, the challenge of incorporating popular participation in a model of democracy which transcends representative democracy cannot ignore the state's inefficiency and the absence of a democratic outlook in the actions of even the most progressive governments.

In almost every respect, the Latin American context is distinct from that which gave rise to the systems of universal social protection developed in European countries – the so-called welfare states. Focusing on our regional context, the question still remains: which model of

protection should be demanded by progressive sectors.

Social protection as a means for the transformation of the state and society

The development of social protection schemes, characteristic of the “virtuous cycle” of organized capitalism, created the welfare state. This term refers to the set of policies developed in response to the modernization of Western societies. It includes a set of political interventions in the economy and in the distribution of opportunities which sought to promote security and equality among citizens with the goal of integrating highly mobile industrial societies.

The welfare state was a response to a demand for social and economic security in countries faced with growing social differentiation. As the division of labor changed, the role of family and community associations as guarantors of individual security weakened. The demands for socioeconomic equality also reflected the growth of nation states and the rapid expansion of citizenship in the larger democracies. Seen from this point of view, the welfare state is an integrating force which operates by expanding citizenship through the extension of social rights. Doing so, it neutralizes the destructive features of modernization. In essence it assumes responsibility for the equality and safety of its citizens.

While the origins of the welfare state can be found in a common historical process – the development of the nation state, mass democracy, and industrial capitalism – different models of social protection were created depending upon the local political culture, institutional structures, forms of struggle, and the resultant correlation of forces. We have the *Assistance Model*, in which the market predominates and social protection is targeted at vulnerable groups; this is a form of *inverted citizenship*; the *Social Insurance Model*, in which citizens receive different treatment depending upon their status in the labor market; and the *Social Security Model*. The latter is most closely identified with the welfare state; it is the only model which dissociates social protection from past economic contributions linking it solely to need. It is based on principles of social justice and social support which guarantee social rights to all citizens. (Fleury, 1994)

The historical conquest and expansion of social rights corresponded with a phase of capitalism which saw the absorption of increasing numbers of workers, unprecedented rates of innovation and profit-making in industrial production, and the construction of state institutions able to effectively distribute wealth as a means to promote social cohesion. The last quarter of the 20th century saw attempts to dismantle these systems with the progressive restriction of access to social protections. This radical dismantling was opposed by both the system’s professionals as well as by its users.

In Latin America the conditions for building a welfare state – homogeneity and organization of the working class, mass entry into the labor market, values of solidarity, heavy income taxes, etc. – are completely lacking. These deficiencies are compounded by the very contradictions introduced by the welfare state itself, such as consumerism, individualism, and the demobilization of citizens. At the same time, the Washington Consensus was becoming the dominant economic ideology promoted via bilateral or multilateral international cooperation. It advocated reducing the role of the state, favoring the market, and subordinating public policy to macroeconomic adjustment plans. These principles were strongly reflected in the guidelines and models defined for social protection.

It was in this adverse context that many Latin American countries began their transition to democracy. They took over from authoritarian populist and/or dictatorial regimes in which patronage and corporate interests predominated and where an elitist political culture remained. Once in government they faced an economic situation weakened by high rates of inflation and the growing burden of external and internal debt.

The ideological onslaught began when the welfare state was declared a failure. The neoliberals saw it as one of the main factors to blame for the capitalist crisis. It discouraged competition and work by ensuring protection “from the cradle to the grave”, as Friedman and Friedman state (1980). Moreover, social benefits were seen as bad fiscal policy because they increased state obligations. The cost of social policies was seen as ever rising, driven by

increases in life expectancy, consumption patterns, and new technology.

Of course the crisis in the welfare state cannot be blamed on the neoliberals of the 70s; we must look rather to the contradictions inherent in the de-commodification of social reproduction within a capitalist economy (Offe, 1984). This had the effect of transforming the conflict of production into a redistributive one. Owing to its bureaucratic inflexibility, the welfare state ended up delaying the application of traditional mechanisms used to correct the excesses of a capitalist economy. Without the Keynesian element related to economic growth, the social security element of the welfare state not only is not preserved, but comes to be seen as the cause of the crisis.

More recent cultural changes present us with a society increasingly bereft of the principles of civic solidarity which make social organization more cohesive. Social relations came to be defined by mistrust, insecurity, and fear of the other. (Rosanvallon, 2007; Lechner, 2007) A society marked by consumerism leads, paradoxically, to solitude and violence (Baudrillard, 2009). Castel (1995:768) reports that the contradiction which characterizes the processes of individualization in modern society threatens the latter with ungovernable fragmentation. Society becomes increasingly divided between those individuals who take advantage of their independence and find their social position assured, and those who bear their individuality like a cross.

In Latin America the question of social cohesion has recently been pushed to the fore by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). This represents a revision of its initial focus on the modernization of production as the key to economic development and social integration. According to ECLAC's Executive Secretary, Machinea (2007:23), the new framework maintains the institution's vocation to pursue positive synergies between economic growth and social equity but puts greater emphasis on improving competitiveness and strengthening participatory, inclusive political democracy. Moreover, it considers social protection as a right available to all members of a society and proposes a social

pact of protection governed by the principles of universality, solidarity, and efficiency.

By highlighting the role played by citizenship as part of a development model that respects human rights, ECLAC (Sojo and Ulthoff, 2007:10) recognizes that poverty is a condition that extends beyond socioeconomic level and lack of minimum access to coverage of basic needs. To be poor or excluded means, fundamentally, to be denied citizenship, or rather to be a pre-citizen with respect to social rights and participation.

ECLAC is stressing the need to generate a fiscal pact that will allow for the implementation of social policies based on inclusion. In practical terms, this means that despite a stance which is openly favorable to the expansion of citizenship, the ECLAC proposal ends up making any expansion of the public sphere contingent upon available tax revenues. The mechanism for assuring progressive social inclusion in universal citizenship is reduced to rather feeble poverty reduction measures.

Already we see Sorj and Martuccelli (2008) criticizing the over-emphasis on redistributive policies seen in regional discussions on social cohesion. These authors point out the need to understand how specific contexts and living conditions affect social cohesion, stating:

[W]ithin their particular contexts and life conditions — including poverty and limited opportunities — individuals have found their own meanings, strategies, and novel ways of expressing solidarity. These are not necessarily predetermined by history or social structures, although obviously they are influenced by them. (Sorj y Martuccelli 2008:2)

Thanks to the priority democratic governments in Latin America have given to poverty reduction, millions of people over the past two decades are no longer destitute. However, this type of social policy has been less successful in reducing inequalities, which persist and still represent a serious difficulty in the construction of citizenship. For the latter to happen it would require both social rights which are exempt from conditionality and productive integration which provides individuals, families, and communities

with the conditions to become autonomous and break their dependence on government handouts.

In any event, this represents a significant change in the regional model of social protection. In Latin America the social question was historically linked to and limited by the claims of the urban labor movement. This resulted in social security policies which did not include the poorest sectors, such as rural workers, domestic workers and the self-employed.

The increasing attention given to poverty and its central importance in the political agenda during the past two decades should not distract from the larger social issue of which it is a part: how to preserve institutional order and authority – governability – while maintaining social organization. To present poverty as an individual problem and to approach it with economic remedies (lines and maps) or in cultural terms (characteristics and values) isolates poverty both from the conditions of its production and from institutional responses based on social protection. Alongside the individualization of poverty, we see the individualization of risk (Procacci, 1999); social policy reforms are increasingly based on characteristics of the individual, so that benefits are tied to contributions.

This synergy between poverty reduction and the neoliberal model of individualizing risks has received little attention by us and deserves critical review. Even when taking into account the advances in social technologies within the welfare system, we must bear in mind that these reinforce alienation in relation to the social determinants of poverty and do nothing to promote social organization among the beneficiaries. Not only that, they reinforce traditional conceptions of women and the family (Arriagada and Mathivet, 2007).

The absence of any prospect for permanent change in the conditions which generate poverty, a *sine qua non* for the material and political development of our societies, exposes the lack of coordination between distributive policies and a program of economic development and environmental conservation which could generate conditions of productive employment, if not for the actual recipients, at least for their dependents. No provision is made for the coordination of economic, social, and environmental policies. This creates a constant tension between the

Ministries in charge of monetary stabilization and the distributive and conservationist claims made by social security and environment ministries.

The type of inclusion which results from policies of poverty reduction and income transfer remains limited to welfare handouts. It cannot guarantee beneficiaries an autonomous integration into the political and economic world and greater stability. By not guaranteeing citizenship rights or assuring a model of economic development which offers employment opportunities, these policies lead to conditions of personal and political dependence on the government, encouraging an inverted citizenship and, ultimately, weakening democratic institutions operating under the rule of law.

If a substantial proportion of the poor manage to escape poverty this will undoubtedly have an important social impact, disrupting traditional identities and generating new social ones. Calderón and Lechner (1998) show the contradictory effects of this process. On the one hand it challenges those collective identities which upheld the traditional order, making for a more democratic and pluralist society. But it also dissolves these collective identities into tribes united more by ephemeral feelings than by lasting connections. They conclude that social actors become weaker as they proliferate (Calderón and Lechner, 1998:18).

Analyzing the paradoxes of Chile's recent modernization, Lechner (2000) finds that the remarkable successes of this process exist side by side with a vague unease which is expressed in feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. Despite improvements in economic and social indicators, opinion surveys carried out by Lechner suggest a marked degree of insecurity, expressed as fear of exclusion, fear of "the other" and fear of meaninglessness. The fear of exclusion lies in the inability of the market to satisfy demands for recognition and symbolic integration which had previously been assured by the welfare state. Fear of "the other" expresses the perception of other people as strangers and potential aggressors; strategies of individual and family retreat are not conducive to sociability. The lack of a larger social horizon makes it difficult to find a sense of order; social life appears as a chaotic process and this only increases feelings of solitude and isolation.

The intensification of this process is based on changes in the relationship between state and society which resulted from a reform process which altered the state's regulatory capacity by prioritizing market processes. The state stopped playing the role of community guarantor.

The individual affirms his or her autonomy by distinguishing it from a idealized "other" and from their experience of "society." The individual recognizes him or herself as a member of the community, while feeling recognized by the community through their collective rights and responsibilities. Which social form best allows respect for and development of individual differences? The mere summation of individualities is not adequate for this. (Lechner, 2007:10).

The lack of any prospect for radical change in the conditions which cause poverty points to what is the real limit of social cohesion in our societies. I refer here to the violence which we see nowadays, especially in larger cities; violence produces generalized feelings of insecurity and fear which can be taken as evidence of an emerging social issue. Public policies are needed which can respond to this critical situation and recreate social cohesion. It is absolutely essential that we closely link the personal security of citizen to social security. As Castel said (1995:769), *there is no social cohesion without social protection.*

Following the two major periods of social policy reform in the last quarter century, each associated with structural adjustments – the overthrow of military governments and the economic crisis – we seem to have entered a period in which the focus is on targeted programs and poverty reduction. The preferred goal of social reforms in the region at the end of the 20th century was to increase coverage and transform stratified systems of social protection inherited from the times of industrialization policies based on import substitution. Health and welfare systems went through major changes, with different orientations depending on whether democratization and/or hyperinflation prevailed at the time.

In Chile these changes were heralded by the introduction of a new paradigm, in which the

State created a dual system. Those who could pay for their health insurance or pension plans were put in the hands of a private market. The State continued to take responsibility for the poorest sectors of the population, thus generating a segmented, individualistic, and perverse model of social policy. In Brazil, the early phases of democratization saw the creation of a universal health care system with comprehensive coverage. It was hoped that an agreement among Brazil's states would result in decentralization and that innovative forms of social participation would be created. The withdrawal of the middle classes from the public system, which faced serious financial problems, was partly encouraged by government subsidies. The public and private systems were to be separate and private insurance was to be optional and supplementary. However, multiple mechanisms allowed the private sector to benefit from public resources, completely subverting the original intention of promoting social solidarity. In Colombia a social insurance model known as structured pluralism was created as a way of combining public and private systems in a network with defined functions. The state was responsible for creating the system and social security for funding it. Insurance and the delivery of services operated under the rules of the competitive market. Once again, the adoption of the social insurance model had negative consequences on public health and proved damaging for the health care services infrastructure (Fleury, 2001).

These national experiences in providing universal coverage by means of the public system, the private market, or even social insurance offer us a virtual laboratory of social protection policies. Now, a few years down the line, we see these paradigmatic reforms are being restrained. Many factors have contributed to this decline in both innovation and even politicization of social protection. These include the demobilization of civil society; a resistance to change on the part of powerful political actors; the take-over of innovative policies by corporate, professional, and business élites; and the wider acceptance of individualistic social protection. Although we see less enthusiasm for universal systems of social protection, past experiences remain valid since they seek to create systems of

social protection characterized by quality and social justice.

More recently the Inter-American Development Bank put forward a proposal called Basic Universalism (Molina, 2006). Sharing ECLAC's pragmatic approach (see above) the IADB's proposal is restricted by the fiscal resources available at each level of development; this is designed to assure the proposal's feasibility. A series of essential universal benefits will be created in accordance with each country's fiscal resources. These benefits must be universal and cover all of the population which fulfills set criteria. Targeting is used to ensure equality of opportunity for all; this is intended to promote social cohesion. It tries to be innovative by combining so-called "old benefits" – universal education, health, and social security (even if they have never actually been universal) – with new benefits, i.e. conditional transfers. Each country would define the set of essential benefits based on financial constraints and the model of development.

Having set aside the reasons of the serious financial constraints which reduce the capacity of national states in the region to increase coverage, and even ignoring what the proposal understands by "essential" benefits, this plan does not transcend the neoliberal vision of social protection. What it does do is revive – prettified with more sophisticated terminology – the old inefficient measures and instruments such as joint financing, targeting, the subordination of social policies to the hegemonic logic of debt repayment, and the use of public investment to further private accumulation.

Minteguiga (2009:63) reviews the core concepts underlying Basic Universalism (BU) and concludes that:

The characterization of universality as "basic" kills any chance of resolving the "new" social issue Basic Universalism is supposed to address: social cohesion. Although attempting to deal with existing gaps in order to meet a particular goal, it does not take into account the history of how these social gaps came about. Nor does it consider the logic of their production and reproduction... The choice of "equal opportunities" as a guideline – one based on

a specific set of criteria (the minimal) - for distribution will also not produce the intended social integration. In proposing the equality of essential rights within the framework of a reduction in universality, at best Basic Universalism shifts the focus onto a new aspect, that of essential rights.

Given the paucity of discussion on social protection, it becomes essential to put the issue of universal policies and the model of social protection back on the regional political agenda. The institutional framework that social protection requires in this context involves restructuring social and political dynamics, with the following central points to be included in the agenda (Fleury, 2009):

- a. Benefits should be based exclusively on citizenship status and should not be linked to participation in the labor market;
- b. Universal social protection should be strengthened by creating systems which are not divided socially or geographically and are able to express the egalitarian ideals which consolidate citizenship;
- c. Inclusion of affirmative action in universal systems to avoid having them reproduce discrimination while they reduce inequalities;
- d. An end to the discrimination of women and the invisibility of their work in the social protection agenda, benefits and guidelines;
- e. Creation of mechanisms for participation and social deliberation which allow the exercise of active citizenship. These should not be limited to areas of social policy, but should also include changes in decision-making processes concerning planning and the economy;
- f. Existence of public social protection policies ensuring provision of services and benefits which might reasonably be claimed with publicly defined standards of quality;
- g. Institutional reinforcement of mechanisms of policy formulation, service delivery, and coordination of social protection which affect human resources, salaries and careers should be undertaken by well-respected organizations which are technically competent and not prey to purely partisan political abuse;

- h. Establishment of effective, sustainable funding mechanisms for social policies which are not subordinated to the volatile dynamics of capital accumulation and which irreversibly place social above individual interests;
- i. Establishment of a progressive taxation system based on principles of social justice, transparency, and effectiveness;
- j. Social protection models which transcend disciplinary and organizational constraints and function as safety nets defined on the basis of users' territories and needs, rethinking the way cities are managed so as to build links between city and citizens;
- k. Elimination of duplicative crossovers which channel social resources towards private providers of social protection services and make the public system perversely supportive of the private sector;
- l. It is absolutely essential to establish effective means of regulating private business practices in the field of social protection, subordinating them to the role of guarantors of goods of social importance;
- m. Prioritization of policies aiming at promoting the material and symbolic practices of a culture of solidarity which helps sustain collective social programs which respect the differences and strengthen the construction of autonomous subjects, in a relational process of constructing a new society.

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