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Abstract:

The essay, reflecting on the papers in this special issue and the conference where they were originally presented, points to the political transformations that have occurred in Latin America in the last twenty years, particularly in relation to poverty. The emerging new politics is not simply a reaction to neoliberal policies but stems from long-term historical trajectories of marginalization and struggle. Changes in the political landscape include a role for social movements whose political actions have impacted both the conditions and meaning of poverty in the Americas. The authors of this essay note two strands in the analysis of social movements discussed by contributors to this issue: the importance of networks and linkages social movements use to build and operate, and the significance of the scale of social movement actions and organization.

Keywords: social movements, poverty, Latin America, post-neoliberalism, networks, scale

Introduction: Social Movements, the Poor and the New Politics of the Americas

Throughout the Americas, strengthened social movements and governmental policy shifts have, the past decade or so, presented new initiatives to meet the interrelated challenges of eradicating poverty, protecting the environment and enhancing overall welfare. The new political initiatives are often understood as reactions to free market liberalism promoted by Washington Consensus institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, these initiatives appear as something more than simply reactions to failed policy regimes, more than ‘resource nationalism’ or protectionism, and they are different from Latin America’s past redistributive agendas. The new politics of the Americas represent attempts to deepen democracy, to expand the rights of citizens, to achieve cooperative economic regional integration, to give both autonomy and recognition to indigenous cultures, and to give voice to the demands of social movements in relation to social justice. Through organization, mobilization and participation, people increasingly have a sense of, and experiences with, making a difference. Popular empowerment has the potential to bring about lasting change in the Americas.

The point of departure for this special issue is the idea that these initiatives and political changes have now matured sufficiently to warrant critical assessment. It is important to exercise caution in assessing political discourse, and to remain equally critical of the discourse of governments and leaders with which one may sympathize and the ones with whom one does not. Although recent changes in official political discourse are significant in and of themselves (as political discourse shapes the
political imaginary and dominant concepts circulated in society), there is not necessarily a strong correlation between this discourse and changes in the living standards of populations. Many mediating factors remain, for example those related to global forces. That is particularly true for the poor, whose livelihood conditions are shaped by a range of issues, such as global food prices or environmental conditions, that cannot be changed simply by decree.

The notion that Latin American governments with links to social movements bear striking resemblance to neoliberal regimes in terms of actual governance and tolerance of opposition is now being pointed out by many analysts, particularly in relation to extractive industries (see Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington, 2011; Gudynas, 2010). This suggests that governing in a way that balances improving economic opportunities, negotiating the pressures of globalization, accommodating impatient social movements, and managing natural resources and the environment sustainably while attaching value to increasing social protection budgets, presents challenges that have yet to be overcome. This resemblance suggests that whether linkages between social movements and governments over this past decade in Latin America have served to counter marginalization and generated anything resembling a “new politics of the Americas” is an empirical question, one that requires investigation.

In order to bring researchers together in discussions and mobilize research around this issue, a conference was held at the University of South Florida in Tampa, February 2011, co-organized by the Patel Centre and the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP). Participants were asked to reflect on these new forms of politics critically in order to promote understanding of their characteristics, what has been achieved, the effects for the poor, whether (or ways in which) the poor are engaged and participate in these movements, the benefits the movements provide to the claims of the poor, internal weaknesses of the new politics and movements, as well as the structural, economic and political factors that condition the achievements of social movements. Specifically, the following themes structured the discussion:

- Characteristics and origins of social movement governance and the new politics of the Americas

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1 See www.crop.org and http://sgs.usf.edu/patel-center
The extent to and manner in which these political forms have successfully addressed poverty, social cohesion and inequality

The political economy of multiple types of linkages and relations – migration, social organization, intergovernmental, inter-class and across scales – within the Americas

Nearly one hundred participants took part in the discussions during the three day conference. These conversations illustrated, firstly, that there is a great deal of political innovation emerging from the new forms of social movement involvement in politics. Participants recounted an abundance of examples of how participatory processes are tried out in new contexts, how new linkages are forged between different types of socio-political actors (social movement-labour linkages in particular), and how new discourses of self-reflection and auto-critique are emerging within social movements. Secondly, the discussions reflected that social movements in the Americas and their sympathizers are still struggling to come to terms with what it means to be closer to, or even invited into, the halls of power. This has brought forward new questions of identity and belonging, co-optation versus practical compromise, social transformation versus the painstaking work of gradual improvements, all of which are questions with which social movements are currently trying to cope. Third, a major topic of discussion was how to understand current forms of social movement mobilization in the Americas in relation to global issues of trade liberalization, climate change and the financial crisis. The keynote address by Norman Girvan (“Social movements confront neoliberalism: Reflections on a Caribbean Experience”, included as a paper here) sparked reflections on how major global issues such as these are “technified” to the point where they become incomprehensible and irrelevant to the broader population, and on what role social movements play in translating these issues into discourses suitable for public education and political mobilization. Fourth, there was reflection and debate on the role of academics based in Northern institutions in supporting and engaging with social movements based in the South. Academics face pressures that make their sustained engagement more difficult. These constraints include decreased funding support and increased demands to teach, administer and publish. They also encounter the difficult balancing act between the roles as sympathizer or activist on one hand, and that of ‘distant’ observer on the other. Finally we debated the concept of “the Americas”, discussing whether this geographically inclusive concept that draws
processes relating to North America into analyses of Latin America and the Caribbean and vice versa is useful. On this issue discussions were inconclusive, in part because of the challenges of producing work that foreground linkages across north-south boundaries, and in part because it seemed that social movements still have an unfulfilled potential to engage in these regional linkages and to move beyond national challenges.

This special issue includes some of the papers that were presented at the conference. In selecting the papers, based on the results of a double-blind post-conference review process, we aimed to highlight work that reflected our original intentions with this initiative, as outlined above. We have been particularly concerned about bringing together analyses that can generate generalizable insights contributing to theoretical construction. Hence, the research themes included in this issue reflects a concern for questions of networks and scale in social movement organization, and how these are facilitated by the contemporary political, economic and social context in the region.

**Social movements and “the new politics”**

Events in the past decade in Latin America have offered significant counterevidence to the thesis of the inevitability of economically liberal globalization. The wave of electoral victories to leftist parties and the rising prominence of social movements (often labeled “new social movements” for their shift away from organized labor politics to a concern for a myriad of issues such as women, the environment, indigenous rights, and human rights more broadly) are generally interpreted as a result of popular dissatisfaction with how neoliberal policy and the elitist parties that promoted them. Indeed, the broad political shift over the past decade is undeniable. Presidents running on leftist platforms were elected between 1998 and 2011 in 11 Latin American countries, which meant that by 2011 two-thirds of the regional population were represented by a government from the left (Roberts, 2012). Halfway through 2012, parties leaders representing “leftist”, “popular” or “progressive” political agendas govern in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. The rise of these parties has typically been accompanied by a dramatic drop in popularity of traditional elite-dominated parties. Many examples of popular uprisings and social movements are well known outside of
the region; like the Landless Workers’ Movement in Brazil (MST), the piqueteros in Argentina, the Water War and the Gas War in Bolivia, the Zapatistas in Chiapas. The emergence of these landmark parties and movements has been described in detail elsewhere (see for example Barrett et al., 2008; Kozloff, 2008; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009; Prevost et al., 2012) and we will not recount that here.

The leftist trend is also seen in connection with initiatives emerging at the regional scale. Governments, particularly those with ties to Chávez’s Venezuela, have attempted to create regional alternatives to the Western-controlled global institutions. Banco del Sur (Bank of the South), the Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, ALBA) or the Conferencia Mundial de los Pueblos sobre el Cambio Climático y los Derechos de la Madre Tierra (The People’s World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth) in Cochabamba in 2010, are examples of a new self-assertion and alternative orientation in development, environment, and foreign policy issues. Social movements play a role, to varying degrees, in these initiatives (for a discussion of ALBA and social movements, see Muhr in this volume).

While social movements are commonly understood as operating through nontraditional means outside of strictly electoral channels (Nicholls, 2007), the concomitant rise of social movements and political parties opens a fresh look at the division between formal and informal politics. Links to political parties can have both empowering and disempowering effects on social movements, in the sense that parties may constrain and polarize movements as well as provide them with political spaces for influence (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009). In many of the countries with new left governments, social movements are recognized as political actors taking formal roles in policy processes (for a discussion of social movement/government relations in Brazil, see Levi in this volume). Bolivia, for example, has established a “Viceministry for coordination with social movements and civil society”, which facilitates contact between social movement actors and other divisions of the government. Such formal recognition of the role of social movements challenges both the governments and the movements themselves to rethink processes of political negotiation, compromise and implementation. For social movement theory, these changing roles of social movements in formal politics can potentially break new ground in understanding movement characteristics, strategies and goals. Ongoing changes in the roles of the
social movements are part of the reason for the significant academic interest in the new left.

While popular reaction against the policy prescriptions of ‘neoliberalismo’ certainly is a factor in the political transformations of the decade, these transformations must be primarily understood as expressions of more complex and structural phenomena. We remain skeptical of the popular accounts that reduce the ongoing political transformations to “uprisings” or a “backlash” against the policy prescriptions of the Washington Consensus, and want to maintain that one has to be cautious about reading complex processes into narrow ideological frames. We would argue for a more historical, long term perspective. The ongoing political transformations are related to historical trajectories of marginalization and struggle from the colonial era and onwards, which motivate social movements to a greater extent than what is often recognized. In this sense, leftist movements in different countries must be understood in their own right, as building on national and local histories of struggle against national elites and for the recognition of local indigenous values, principles and ontologies. So to a certain extent, each country is different and warrants distinct analysis.

Further, the rise of social movements and popular parties is interrelated, to a significant extent, with structural changes in political institutions and political spaces in the post-dictatorship, neoliberal era, such as the emergence of stable democratic institutions and a new discourse centered on rights. In this sense, the developments across the region are remarkably similar. A range of countries undertook radical rewriting of constitutions in the 1990s (Colombia in 1991, Bolivia in 1994, Ecuador in 1998 and Venezuela in 1999), establishing new sets of political and civil rights (Yashar, 1999). This in turn resulted in the political incorporation and heightened mobilization of marginalized groups, which helped ethnically-based, popular parties achieve electoral success (Van Cott, 2003a, 2003b; Zamosc, 2007). Already in the early 1990s, the Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples by the International Labor Organization (ILO 169) was ratified by Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru and Colombia, with Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina and eventually Chile following suit more recently.

While many of these legal advances were made under the auspices of neoliberal programs, and as such sought to fold social difference and power inequalities into technical fixes and individual rights (Perreault and Martin, 2005),
Social movements have used the advances as platforms for mobilization. As Postero (2007) describes in her book on the multicultural reforms in Bolivia in the 1990s and their aftermath, these reforms attempted to instill values of civic, rational participation in the indigenous population. Yet the unintended effect was that these civil values of participation could be turned against the state, as seen for example in the Gas War of 2003 when social protests toppled the government of Gonzalo Sanchéz de Lozada. While rights may be limited and only marginally followed up by the state, they provide people with a sense of entitlement, becoming the basis for making claims against the state. Indigenous movements, for example, are now actively using the ILO 169 to argue for participation and prior consultation in resource extractive projects in their territories (McNeish, 2012). This is not to suggest that social movement have had to be told by governments that they had rights before they started demanding them. But it does suggest that social movements should not be understood as operating in a vacuum, unaffected by structural changes in political institutions or in the global arena. When analyzing the rise and achievements of social movements we have to take into account both the debilitating and disempowering effects of dispossession and poverty, as well as the empowering effects of democracy and rights. As the papers in this special issue illustrate, the success of social movements is determined by how they manage to negotiate the spaces within existing institutions, as well as how they manage to affect reform of those institutions over time.

**What is at stake for the social movements and the poor?**

The development scenario for Latin America has changed significantly since ‘the lost decade’ of the 1980s. Most predictions for the region are of sustained economic growth, continued poverty reduction and macroeconomic stability. In fact, The Economist has labeled this decade ‘the Latin American decade’ (The Economist, 2010). That such optimism for the continent’s future resides in such liberalist circles, at the same time as politics is shaped by ‘new left’ presidents and social movements, is both remarkable and puzzling. The Economist, and those supporting the economic liberalization reforms before the turn of the millennium, see the current positive development trends as a result of these reforms taking hold – basically giving the current leaders a free ride. The counter-argument is that the positive trends result from how the current leaders have, spurred on by social movements repoliticizing poverty
and inequality, implemented critically important policies to strengthen social safety
nets, empower the poor, and regain some control over central economic sectors while
redistributing their returns (particularly of natural resources).

What is clear is that Latin America has returned to positive trends in terms of
income equality, and is now almost back to pre-liberalization levels. Inequality levels
rose steadily from the ‘lost decade’ through the neoliberal era (from 48.9 Gini points
in the early 1980s to 53.7 in 2002), and started a gradual drop from 2002 to 2010
(49.8 Gini points in 2010) (Cornia, 2012). Yet equity gains do not appear to be
exclusive to governments of the left. Roberts (2012) finds that a decline in inequality
took place in countries governed by diverse administrations of the left, center and
right, and that there was no correspondence between equality gains and any kind of
redistributive policy. Along a similar vein, Borges Sugiyama (2011) found that
adoption of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs widely agreed to have
reduced poverty in Latin America are not significantly related to left or right political
platforms. This seems to lend some credence to the argument that it is the favorable
external economic environment and market forces that have brought the poor into
higher income brackets.

It must be kept in mind, however, that “left” or “right” labels are not
necessarily good indicators of what policies are pursued, and that governments of
different ideological profiles have adopted redistributive policies. As Roberts (2012:
16) argues, “the institutionalization of democratic competition in a post-adjustment
era of relative economic stability has induced governments to respond to demands for
social inclusion.” In other words, democratic forces are pressing for social inclusion
and redistribution also in countries where leftist parties have not captured the
executive. This suggests a broad influence of social movements in the region. Social
mobilization around issues of social inclusion, economic opportunity and
redistribution are critical to sustaining policy regimes that allow the poor to take part
in welfare improvements.

In a deeper sense, however, Gini co-efficients are weak indicators of the types
of economic, social, cultural and political dispossession that marginalized groups
face, and tend to presume that poverty is only an issue of income. Improving
conditions of poverty is not just a matter of economic redistribution, but changing
more deep-seated structures of power (Haarstad and St. Clair, 2011). Social
movements play a critical role in bringing attention to these other asymmetries and
different types of inequalities. This has potentially a more important effect on long
lasting solutions to poverty than a purely economic perspective. Indigenous social
movements are instrumental in this sense. Indigenous peoples have been and remain
subject to multiple forms of dispossession, discrimination and exclusion, which are
intricately related (but not reducible) to economic poverty and income inequality. In
addition to far worse socioeconomic conditions than the general population,
indigenous peoples have been excluded from labor markets, public education and
health services (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 1994). Thus, while indigenous social
movements have called attention to economic inequality, their assertion of the right to
cultural difference, diverse ontologies and ideas of the good life (“buen vivir”), and
territorial autonomy have been just as central to their struggle. The new constitutions
of Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009) with the participation of social movements in
their design, have, gone a long way in asserting rights to indigenous territorial
autonomy and cultural and environmental rights. Indeed, Bolivia has now been
renamed The Plurinational State of Bolivia. And Ecuador is the first country in the
world that gives rights to “Mother Earth”, based on indigenous ontological views that
make less distinction between humans, other sentient beings, and the natural
environment. These markers of official cultural recognition are not necessarily
important in themselves, but they may provide a sense of belonging and entitlement
that can translate into collective action against different types of dispossession.

Yet the focus on the poor is not only on indigenous people. The multiple
forms that dispossession takes means that movements have often crossed boundaries
between different social sectors and mobilized from different types of marginalized
groups. While indigenous groups have received much of the attention, the people that
social movements represent are a complex mix of campesinos, trade unionists, middle
class groups who have lost their savings, urban poor and unemployed, disgruntled
informal sector workers and more. The success of some movement mobilization, as
seen for example during the “Argentinazo” in 2001, has been the temporary
unification of different social groups in line with common values and interests –
drastic change in the leadership of the country (Schuster, 2008). But the region has
also seen more lasting relations between initially distinct groups, as through what has
been termed ‘social movement unionism’. Organized labor has not recovered its
strength and influence from before the neoliberal period and is now more divided and
fewer in numbers (Weyland, 2004). Yet there are examples indicating that it can make
up for some of this fragmentation by engaging in mutual exchange and networking with other types of social movements (Novelli, 2011). In practice the divisions between these types of actors are largely imaginary: workers are also community members, urban poor, or even indigenous. At the same time, labor organizations can pursue strategies that can be at odds with the interests of social movements within their communities (see Rodriguez in this issue).

If this decade indeed turns out to be the ‘Latin American decade’ it is still an open question what effects this will have on poor and marginalized groups. As Boron (2008) has noted, the political and economic foundations of the region are extremely unyielding. GDP growth, natural resource exports and macroeconomic stability does not automatically translate into improved livelihoods for the marginalized. Economic development will have to be accompanied by a continuous politicization of the multiple dimensions of marginalization and inequality. Thus the processes described above must be seen as ongoing processes of struggle and negotiation. And for this reason, social movements have a critical role to play and deserve particular attention.

**The articles in this special issue**

In critically assessing the achievements of social movements and the factors that condition these achievements, the discussions in the articles in this special issue run along two main strands. One of these strands concerns the networks and linkages that social movements build and operate through. This includes relationships between different types of social movements (how one movement manages or fails to maintain constructive linkages to movements based on other interest groups), and between social movements and a party or the state (how these relations change political spaces and draw movements into formal political structures). Several articles discuss how networks and linkages can both open political spaces and constrain political action, and how failure to build horizontal linkages constrains this action. The second strand in the discussions concerns the related issue of scale in social movement action and organization. Even though the papers analyze social movements from different scalar perspectives, from the local community-based organizations to global social movements, they make explicit the possibilities and constraints attached to particular scalar forms of organization. The articles thus pose questions about the challenges of
transcending the scale of the grassroots, networking across national boundaries, representativeness of global social movements and local attachments.

In the first article, Norman Girvan illustrates concisely the problems of mobilizing collective action beyond the national scale. He reflects on the experience of social movements protesting against the Economic Partnership Agreement signed between 15 Caribbean countries and the European Union (EU). Civil society opposition to the agreement was widespread, but as Girvan notes, the structure of the negotiation process constrained effective social movement action against it. The informal and non-transparent nature of international trade negotiations, the power imbalances involved, and the technical character of the issues being negotiated, created significant constraints upon civil society action. For these and other reasons Girvan identifies, the protest campaign never achieved a popular dimension that could capture the attention of the media and blogs. The lessons for civil society groups involved in such campaigns revolve around pedagogical “detechnification” that can help communicate the relevance of trade issues to the broader public and even out information and power asymmetries.

The second paper, by Thomas Muhr, describes a contrasting type of regionalization project, one developed under the ALBA-TCP initiative (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Peoples’ Trade Agreement). He argues that this initiative cannot be understood simply as a bloc of nation states, but as an initiative that spans scales from the local to the transnational. Social movements are central to the constitution of this initiative, for instance through the Council of Social Movements. In outlining the foundational concepts and ideas that shape the initiative, he stresses the importance of “organized society” including the popular power exercised through councils and movements within the construction of this alternative construction of space. The Council of Social Movements arose from meetings between Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and social movements, in the context of the World Social Forum in Caracas in 2006, and its role is to present proposals, projects and declarations to the Council of Presidents. A central component of the initiative is in energy policy, where joint venture oil companies are established to encourage energy cooperation and oil-based aid. It also has humanitarian components, in literacy and health programs. In his concluding discussion of the foundational ideas of these initiatives, Muhr sees them as formulated explicitly to counter neoliberalism and to rescale local struggles to regional and global scales.
The article by Charmain Levy centers on the problematic, but still potentially effective, relationship between social movements and political parties. The Workers’ Party (PT) in Brazil was established in the late 1980s and 1990s as a groundbreaking symbiosis between social movements and the political party, aimed to serve as a vehicle for bringing social movement claims into the institutional political arena. The subsequent impact of the PT on national politics makes this a particularly pertinent case study of social movement-party dynamics. The article focuses on three movements, a housing movement, a women’s movement and the landless workers’ movement, and their relationship to the PT. These movements have formed different relationships to the PT depending on their structure, goals and identity. The character of the relationship to the PT also influenced the movements’ discourse and actions, as well as their abilities to critique PT policies. Various effects, both certain material gains and demobilization, are observed as a result of these movements’ relations with the PT. There are also certain areas of policy that may be easier to influence than others. Levy’s discussion of the experiences of these movements suggests that networked proximity to political parties is a tightrope exercise, balancing between reproducing power structures on one hand and opening political spaces for excluded populations on the other.

Elizabeth Bennett’s article illustrates the scale problem that social movements encounter when they organize transnationally. While there is a broad consensus that global social movements have become important actors in global governance, it is also clear that they have to overcome significant internal democratic deficits if they are to pose credible challenges to the democratic deficit in the global arena. A critical question is whether global social movements deepen democratic representation at the global scale, or whether they simply reify the representational deficit in the global arena and uphold North-South polarization. Since global social movements often do not have stable and reliable systems of aggregating the interests of those they represent, their increasing authority in global affairs is vulnerable to being dominated by the most resourceful of their members. Using the fair trade movement as a case, and drawing on empirical research in Mexico, the US, Canada, Peru and other countries, Bennett discusses the ability of its core organization to represent the broader movement. She identifies a series of problematic issues for democratic representation in this movement, which she in turn uses to discuss how global social movements can improve internal democratic mechanisms.
In discussing the Venezuelan participatory health care reform (Barrio Adentro), Mahmood, Muntaner, Leon, and Perdomo bring attention to a state-led attempt to give the poor arenas to shape their own welfare arrangements. Reforms of the Venezuelan health sector are closely aligned with the broader political-ideological shifts taking place over the past two decades. The neoliberalization process of the 1990s paved the way for wide-scale privatization of the healthcare system. Upon taking office, Hugo Chávez reversed many of these reforms and attempted to remove barriers to health care. “Social missions” were established as parallel structures to the government ministries, with the intention of overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, increasing community participation and responding rapidly to social needs, particularly in barrios. Popular participation by marginalized social sectors, organized through Health Committees, has been a fundamental element of Barrio Adentro. Mahmood and co-authors used a mixed-methods approach to study the barriers and challenges to community participation in Barrio Adentro. The structured methodology is a welcome addition to the discussions on the “Bolivarian” processes of change in Venezuela, which often follow political-ideological lines. The study illustrates the constraints on creating substantive participatory spaces for the poor, even when there appears to be significant political will at “the top”. The discussion outlines a series of constraints both at different levels of the state structure and internal to communities. These findings have broader implications for our understanding of the potential for participation in instituting democratic practices at the state-civil society nexus.

Patricia Rodríguez’s article also examines obstacles to the processes of participation and attempts by communities to overcome them, yet in a very different political context. The case study is based on the Caribbean regions of Colombia, which of course have not undergone any process of political transformation similar to Chávez’s Venezuela, and where violence and coercion often sanctioned by the state form part of the backdrop for social organizations. In this context, the article looks at internal relations between labor and community organizations and the impacts of these relations on their political influence. Rodríguez discusses attempts to develop labor and community organization synergies in the Magdalena and Cesar regions, and how industrialization projects by the state and transnational companies have counteracted and constrained the development of these synergies. She argues that the organizational success of these movements depends heavily on the synergy developed between these movements and the organizational network strategies that they employ.
In the context of violence and elite domination, labor and community organizations have significant shared interest in promoting alternative development visions, yet there are substantial internal and external challenges that such co-organization needs to overcome.

Anna Brodrecht’s article takes on a counterintuitive approach to the study of social mobilization, asking why collective action in most situations does not arise among the poor. Pointing out that various social mobilization theories assert that groups of individuals need resources in the form of social capital, bonds of solidarity, networks and trust, she examines a case where conditions of poverty preclude such resources from being built. Inhabitants in the Canto del Mar squatter settlement in Lima, Peru, face significant challenges in gaining access to employment and education. The struggles of social persistence, and competitive relations between settlers over the rights to lots present significant constraints on the formation of a sense of community. Internal competition for entitlement to lots has created contention between settlers and undermined the types of relations upon which collective action can be constructed. The internal relations of the settlement are instead characterized by mutual suspicion and social exclusion. The broader implication of this study is an improved understanding of the internal and material constraints on social mobilization among the poor.

The article by Jonathan Barton and Álvaro Roman further develops the debate from the previous two articles, on the ways in which deficient and fragmented relations between actors constrain social mobilization and influential claims making. In the case of political contention against the forestry sector in Chile there is a lack of collective organization between the movements and organizations of labor, indigenous groups and environmental activists. The power geometries of this sector are generated by the alliances and associativity of “mainstream” and “marginal” actors, or the degree to which they share understandings of cultural and organization structures, goals and agendas. The context of “glocalization” facilitates horizontal and vertical networking of both mainstream and marginal actors, but differences in the strength of their networks, the coherence of their agendas, and differential access to decision-making processes at the state level shapes socio-ecological outcomes in favor of mainstream interests. The article illustrates the divergence of strategies and claims employed by different types of marginal actors, despite their common
fundamental interest in socio-ecological justice and shared opponents (forestry firms and the centralized state).

Finally, in the conclusion, the editors of the special issue return to the questions of the content, achievements and constraints of social movements and the new politics of the Americas, and effects for the poor. We discuss in particular the two major strands of debate in the articles, the interrelated issues of scale and networks in social movement organization and action.

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