URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA -

towards a critical understanding

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The concept of urban social movements is a relatively new one in
relation to the analysis of Latin America. This is not to say that
the reality of urban social movements is a new one since the or-
ganization and mobilization of urban popular sectors to improve
their living conditions have been going on for several decades.
But for a long time, their significance was not appreciated as
a result of the impact made by two variants of the theory of urban
marginality: the radical variant which painted an optimistic pic-
ture of future mass uprisings, and an opposite variant which saw
only the structurally determined passivity of sectors that are un-
connected with key social, economic and political processes. The
significance of urban movements began to emerge when these theories
were put into question by collective practices that had developed
out of the dynamics of urban living: major contradictions surged
up from among the various types that are encountered in the city,
certain types of conflict became stabilized and old forms of ac-
tion and organization of the popular sectors found a new acceptan-
ce.

Fifteen years ago, given the circumstances of the 1968-1973 period,
the *pobladores* movements in Chile represented an important attempt
to mobilize the homeless, to organize the popular neighbourhoods
under the banner of class confrontation and to search for alter-
native projects at both the material and the ideological levels.
The movement was limited by its lack of articulation with other
expressions of the popular movement and by its dependence on the
political apparatus for implementing its strategy for the conquest
of power. However, this social force was seen to be acting in the
political arena with great vigour in various circumstances, and it

represented a pole of reference which surely provoked many experiences in other national contexts. Various other movements of *pobladores* threatened to break the traditional channels through which control over urban popular sectors was exercized.[1] Such situations led to a revision of the concept of urban movements and to a renewed emphasis on the historical trajectories underlying their strong conjunctural expressions. Their close connection with the popular movement was recognized and there were references to their multiplicity of objectives, which went further than the urban question as it is posed by sociologists.

This reality was then analyzed in terms of the concept of urban social movement (USM) which had been put forward by a school of European sociologists; the concept was then still being worked out on the basis of specific experiences and no consensus existed around its application.[2] The theoretical advances on USMs, which were based mainly on an analysis of industrialized societies, gave rise to contrasting analyses of dependent societies; these did not escape a measure of reductionism whenever attempts were made to relate concrete analyses to a normative formula derived from outside. It is not so much that the specificity of dependent societies is of a kind which requires separate analytical categories, but the social reality cannot be adequately understood in terms of global generalizations. We must recognize that the concept of USM gave rise to numerous articles in Latin America, even though the theory was taken over in a way which often lacked the necessary creativity and critical sense, especially in relation to urban policies implemented by national states, to urban contradictions, to the contradictions involved in the reproduction of the labour force, and to the articulation of these movements with the dynamics of social classes. The evolution of certain ideas put forward by Manuel Castells illustrates these difficulties. In 1977 he saw the experience of Santiago de Chile as a pole of reference for the notion of USM in the full sense of the word, whereas he now argues that the concept of USM cannot be applied to Latin American urban movements because of their intrinsic heteronomy and their close dependence on the political sphere.[3]

In order to come to grips with the phenomenon of Latin American urban movements, we must base our analysis on the problematic that we have just outlined and on the result of research done by individuals and local centres whose main objective, in recent years, has been to systematically examine national experiences. Rather than work from a limited definition which reduces urban movements to practices that are associated with urban contradictions, it would seem preferable to examine empirically the range of collective actions that can be observed in urban settings. Taking care to avoid generalizing about the situation in the sub-continent as a whole on the basis of particular experiences, and ensuring that individual experiences are always set in their particular historical contexts, we can divide the great variety of movements into five categories, complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

I. The Territorial Movements

Territorial movements correspond to the set of collective practices and behaviour which lead to the creation of popular neighbourhoods (*barrios populares*) in ways which depart from the established norms and the institutional mechanisms of the city. In a majority of the large cities of Latin America, the urban masses are confronted with an acute housing crisis to which they respond with collective action aimed at the conquest of urban space which makes up the territory of daily life. Land invasions are the main form of pressure against land rent and the housing market. These are forms of struggle which clash with the legal norms governing access to urban land, and they bring about changes in the rules and give rise to institutional responses; furthermore they substantially change the face of the city.

The invasions represent a primary level of collective practices carried out by the masses, with majority proletarian participation. But through this type of practice, it is territorial rather than class consciousness which is stimulated. Its popular connotation which derives from confrontation with the established order, is retained over a long period of time and may reemerge in the form of radical attitudes to other types of action.

The ambiguous nature of the invasions and their reappropriation
through the usual mechanisms of domination, given an adequate in-
tegrative response on the part of the State, have given rise to
much discussion. First there is a political ambivalence: it has
been demonstrated that the invasions have opened the way for cli-
entalistic relationships that have strengthened oligarchical
power.[4] The case of Lima illustrates the ways in which this type
of clientelism, which is designed to seek out a base of popular
support for particular regimes, tends to operate: a popular regime
would be content with a kind of immediate paternalism, seeking to
exercize direct vertical control over the coopted masses by ex-
pressing support for the invasions and using the masses as a coun-
terweight to the emerging working classes; a liberal regime would
delegate welfare and organizational functions to the dominant po-
litical parties; a corporatist regime would control the invasions
and strengthen the links between the territorial communities and
the State apparatus.[5] Then there is a spatial ambivalence: not all
of the invasions infringe the principle of land rent; some may even
have the support of landowners for whom invasions fit into a stra-
tegy of increasing land valuations. Finally ideological ambivalen-
ce: two authors have denounced the manner in which the invaders
are themselves invaded by philanthropic welfare institutions whose
objective is to dampen their radicalism and foster individualistic
values as an alternative to class antagonism.[6]

Recognition of this ambivalence does not imply agreement with the
proposition that the invasions are no more than a means of inte-
gration into the power structure. As the number of invasions grow,
the capacity of governments, state apparatuses, parties and wel-
fare institutions to control them become exhausted, and they are
torn by internal dissent as one political regime succeeds another.
The worsening of the urban crisis reduces the material goods avail-
able during the process of integration; after a time, popular mo-
bilization can no longer be contained by the channels of coopta-
tion and begins to recover its autonomy of action and organization.
These integrative mechanisms are less and less relevant to the dy-
namics of urban life in many parts of Latin America. The new in-

vasions which continue to take place do not seem to be providing a base of support for the political regimes.

Inversely, there are highly polarized invasions which fit into a strategy of popular mobilization in support of policies of radical opposition. In such a case, the invasion is presented as a radical break with the system; the community organization which then emerges shares in this radical outlook. There is a constant search for ways of widening the breach with the urban system and to develop alternative life practices and ideological referents with a clear revolutionary content. For example, certain 'proletarian neighbourhoods' in Mexico City are true territorial enclaves of a utopian character which only function whenever there is a strong militant leadership, usually students, and when the population is recruited from the weakest social and economic strata.[7]

Between these two extreme situations of cooptation and radicalism, both of them based on a common logic of integration and breakdown, most popular neighbourhoods follow a pendulum movement, moving from mobilization to retreat and back again in accordance with the shifting circumstances of the urban situation. Collectivisation of behaviour depends on the type of organization which emerges during or after the invasion and on the kinds of conflicts which divide the community.

A horizontal territorial organization operates at the level of the many problems of daily life and at best, manages to achieve a community-based solidarity. A vertical organization becomes legitimized through its capacity to negotiate with and apply pressure on the authorities; often it becomes a spingboard which enables a *cacique* leadership to achieve upward mobility. The mobilizing power of an organization does not seem to be guaranteed except within a democratic centralist structure. Once they are seen to be legitimate by the base, they acquire a greater degree of social representativity than local institutions and must therefore be taken into account by the public authorities.

At this stage, we must distinguish two dimensions of territorial movements. The first refers to the invasions as such which become politically significant as their number increases within particular sets of circumstances, forcing the system to give up a measure of political space. As had been demonstrated by the Peruvian and Chilean cases, repeated waves of invasions can seriously split the state apparatus. The second dimension relates to the stages which follow an invasion. There are no viable alternative projects, no breaks with the logic of the urban structure such as socio-spatial segregation. But they generate a social reality based on territory which is a potential source of conflict. The significance of such territorial movements is due in part to their role as collective mobilizers, not only of working class elements but also of various fractions of the subordinate classes that have no access to trade unions or other channels of popular participation.

II. Issue-oriented Movements (*movimientos reinvidicativos*)[8]

Following upon the territorial movements, the issue-oriented movements are concerned with urban consolidation and access to basic services and amenities. Demands for fresh water, electricity, public transport etc. give rise to continuing struggles waged by collective organizations in the face of poor planning and indifference on the part of the public authorities.

The neighbourhoods created as a result of invasions are not the only ones having to cope with these problems. Other types of popular neighbourhoods are involved in demand-oriented struggles: low cost housing estates planned by the State for the higher strata of the popular sectors; private urban developments (*urbanizaciones*) (there are more of these than of other types in such cities as Quito, La Paz or Montevideo) initiated on the basis of (often fraudulent) collective land purchases; inner-city slum-dwellers (*tugurios*) whose involvement in issue oriented movements remains limited because of their low level of group cohesion and their subproletarian social composition.[9]

Popular neighbourhoods express their needs through requests and demands[10]: we can distinguish between the two in terms of the de-

gree of conflict involved and in terms of the level of awareness
that the State is involved. A request is a commercial and/or po-
litical transaction between social needs and the public or private
institutions which provide services. The notion of demand on the
other hand implies that the relation with the state and with the
institutions which provide the services will be seen to involve
a contradiction of interests and a certain level of conflict.
Only rarely do demands openly clash with the capitalist and finan-
cial interests of the institutions which produce or manage urban
services. Thus the contradiction lies in the ideological and po-
litical sphere, although there are significant variations asso-
ciated with the specific content of each one. The need for water
can generate important issue-oriented movements which enjoy broad
support, stand in strong opposition to the State and crystallize
many aspects of daily life. The struggle for public transport,
on the other hand, has a more conjunctural character and quickly
moves towards a confrontation situation involving the transport
companies. However all of these demands can be seen as a popular
response to urban policies which, in spite of significant varia-
tions from one country to the other, tend to move towards a kind
of urban dualism according to which the central neighbourhoods are
well looked after while the popular ones are given little atten-
tion.

The organizers who actually carry out issue-oriented struggles
come from the various kinds of neighbourhood committees.
Territorial organizations begin to broaden the range of their
actions and divide themselves into committees dealing with specif-
ic issues such as water, electricity, education, health etc. The
formulation of demands, in turn, brings several neighbourhoods to-
gether and opens the way for the setting up of federations by zones
and by districts as well as nationally. In this way, the issue-
oriented movements speed up the process through which urban popu-
lar sectors, which represent a force within the popular movement
as a whole, acquire an organic character. The hegemonic struggles
for control of the neighbourhood federations reflect the signifi-
cance which is attributed to this force; they set limits to the

trend towards autonomy and organic integration, as do the divisions which affect workers, peasant and student movements.[11]

The issue-oriented movements are interested in something more than urban services and amenities and the problems of collective consumption. They are also involved in issues of individual consumption and survival strategies for families, especially during times of crisis. A case in point is the spread of popular meals' services (especially in Pinochet's Chile), or women's organizations which set up solidarity networks to help look after children or coordinate shopping, the committees of the unemployed, or the attempts to take control of welfare programmes based on the principle of 'food in exchange for community work'. Individual consumption and survival can be supported by organizations that are not centralized but operate at the neighbourhood level: cultural and religious groups, women's and youth groups (it is particularly essential to analyze the role of the Church in the organizational life of Latin American neighbourhoods)*. Such organizations play an important role in giving structure to community activities and in training the leaders of the social movements.

The networks of neighbourhood associations and the demands which they formulate raises the problem of local power. The struggles in which neighbourhood associations become involved gives them a much higher degree of legitimacy and representativity than the municipal authorities (which make up the lowest level within a strongly hierarchical State, the Spanish *cabildo* combined with modern forms of the authoritarian State). It is significant, in this respect, that popular demands are usually directed towards the State rather than the municipalities. Several regimes in Latin America have tried to overcome these difficulties by setting up specialized structures designed to reach into the popular neighbourhoods, but these have always been governed by a logic of elite cooptation and bureaucratic control. Wrought by internal political divisions and confronted with the demands of the urban movements, these structures tend to become inactive. The State

*See Vink's chapter in this volume.

can then attempt to divert popular pressures by setting up new, formally democratic municipal institutions in an attempt to de-legitimize the popular institutions. The question of local power can also be revived through local elections and through allowing the popular forces a certain degree of representation on munici-pal bodies. We can see the beginning of a new dynamic of opposi-tion and complementarity between territorial organizations and municipal institutions, of a certain articulation between popu-lar demands and urban management, against the background of de-veloping strategies to guide the struggle against the central State. We do not yet have a clear appreciation of the role of neighbourhood associations in the context of local politics, whether in their new (Peru, Brazil) or their old (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico) forms; nor can we fully understand the dynamics which they generate or the political response of the State in defining the form and context of the relationship be-tween local and central power.

In all these aspects, one of the most important questions raised by the issue-oriented movements is the relationship between so-cial movements and their organic quality. We need to know in which cases these tendencies are either mutually reinforcing or mutually destructive.

III. Sectoral or Conjunctural Movements

Although popular neighbourhoods are most obviously affected by urban problems, they are not the only neighbourhoods to become mobilized in response to these problems. Other types of collec-tive processes develop from various aspects of the urban crisis in the large cities of Latin America.

First, there are forms of mobilization which affect social strata that cannot be regarded as belonging to the popular sectors, particularly the middle classes, as in the case of protest move-ments which oppose urbanization policies in Caracas, or the move-ment that rose up against a motorway construction project in Bogotá.[12] There are counter-revolutionary movements which cam-paign against popular objectives as for example in Chile.

These conjunctural actions are undertaken as a reaction against public policies and the urban movement; they set the stage for direct confrontation between social groups for control of space, amenities and services.

Sectoral transport problems give rise to more serious problems. In Brazil, sudden strikes and spontaneous demonstrations called 'quebras-quebras' (literally 'breakages') are used by parts of the labour force to protest against the state of public transport. Trains are blockaded, buses destroyed and stations assaulted in protest actions whose regularity, repetition and impact demonstrate that these are more than mere spontaneous outbursts.[13] Moreover the whole range of people who use the public transport system becomes involved. In Lima and in Peruvian provincial cities, the response to a sudden deterioration in living standards is crystallized around increases in public transport costs which lead to uprisings and to the paralysis of the public transport system, sometimes in alliance with the public transport operators. Every time fares go up, student sponsored violent demonstrations erupt. In Quito and Guayaquil the 'War of the four reales' was set off by a sudden and substantial rise in public transport fares and was marked by violent demonstrations involving students and popular sector families, that had considerable political impact. This type of action involving various levels of militancy is now quite common, to the point where public transport fares have become one of the most sensitive issues which local governments have to deal with.[14]

Conflict over issues of public transport can also be initiated by the operators. Contrary to widespread belief, they are not agents of a transport monopoly but represent a small, differentiated emergent petty bourgeoisie, alternating between survival and speculation, in the shadow of the system of public services. Usually it is only the Chilean lorry drivers' strikes that spring to mind when we think of large scale protests by transport operators, but the frequent strikes of the cooperatives and transport firms of Quito, Lima, La Paz etc. are of a different nature; here, the objective is to use the threat of paralyzing the entire

city in order to obtain subsidies, credits for importing new vehicles... and measures of power. While the transport operators' movements are defending their own interests before anything else, they can sometimes enter into an alliance with popular forces, or deal with parts of the State apparatus. In cities where communication takes place mainly through displacement and transportation, such movements have significant strength. They have the capacity to bring the city to a halt in a way which is both more visible and effective than anything the labour movement can do.

Other segments of the petty bourgeoisie or the popular sectors whose economic activities are also connected with urban life can also become mobilized. This is frequently the case for school teachers and municipal workers; their strikes create a climate of insubordination and protest against low levels of public services, a climate which is conducive to popular mobilization. Street vendors who are constantly harassed in the city centre areas and demand recognition and respect also become involved in the mobilization process. This kind of sectoral mobilization provides a base of support for urban movements insofar as they go beyond the articulation of strictly professional interests, and it promotes the voicing of demands associated with the organization and management of the city. Their principal activists often come from the popular sectors, live or work in the popular neighbourhoods and participate in local organizational networks.

Sectoral or conjunctural movements are made up of a variety of activists who tend to act spontaneously: such movements are ephemeral and episodic and do not put forward a global project. However in certain circumstances they can have a significant impact; they can bring together many different social sectors and increase the degree of social polarization in the city.

IV. Urban Revolts

The widespread mobilization of large parts of the urban masses in Latin America tends to increase during periods of sudden and

intense pauperization which result from a worsening of the eco-
nomic crisis. In such countries as Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Boli-
via or Mexico, unexpected and irrational revolts - apparently
doomed to failure from the start - tend to occur repeatedly when-
ever the State is not omnipotent and both employment and real
wages are forced down as a result of international pressures.
These revolts are seen by the press as spontaneous reactions
against government and against a fall in living standards down
to intolerable levels. However we can put forward the hypothesis
that they have a significance which goes well beyond immediate
circumstances and that they represent one dimension of urban
movements in dependent countries.

The experience of Peru can serve as a useful illustration. An in-
itial kind of revolt was that which took place in 1975 with great
spontaneity. It involved *tugurio* dwellers who invaded the city
to pillage and plunder at a time when the system of control of
public order had been disrupted and the government's policy of
redistribution had been blocked as a result of the crisis; this
hastened the fall of the reformist military government. The move-
ment was an in-organic one, similar to those that come under the
category of uprisings by marginalized masses, but it was sporadic
and, in the end, it was controlled by the authorities. The re-
volts that followed rested more clearly on the organizational
base of the popular neighbourhoods as a reaction against govern-
ment economic measures; demonstrations,blockades, hunger strikes
etc.;-forms of action which demonstrated less spontaneity and
greater clarity as class-based responses. Then, between 1977 and
1979, there were several nation-wide strikes called by the trade
unions and supported by the popular neighbourhoods through their
territorial and issue-oriented movements. During the most active
period of the strike, when roads leading to the popular neighbour-
hood and all other means of communication were blocked, Lima and
other provincial cities were paralyzed. There was more to these
actions than opposition to the military regime since they have
continued under the present civilian government as well as such
political goals as the demand for representation of the dominated

classes. It is also possible to observe a gradual convergence of the various elements that make up the popular movement in the city. Territory thus ceases to have solely a residential connotation and becomes the point of convergence of various struggles.

It should be stressed, in relation to these national strikes, that there is a tendency towards convergence of the trade union movements and the mobilization of the urban masses, which raises the question of orientation for the labour federations and the political parties. At times, urban revolts provide popular and logistical support to strike movements (support given to miners', fishermens' and teachers' strikes) without which their actions could not be sustained. Such support generates a territorial dynamics where demands related to employment are combined with consumer demands. The national strikes raise the question of articulation between trade union and neighbourhood organizations, as well as that of its dependence on a divided leadership.

These forms of revolt, less organic in character but clearly putting into question the legitimacy of power, have erupted in Bogotã, and more recently in Quito. There, the working class is largely in a minority and the greater degree of spontaneity which exists is associated with the fact that the popular movement is not as organic in character. In Bogotã on the other hand, the overwhelming weight of labour federations has limited the degree of participation of the urban masses.

Clearly, such actions go beyond the usual lines of demarcation between trade union and neighbourhood movements. What are the terms of the convergence between the trade union principle and the urban principle, between the concepts of workers' movement and popular movement, between professional (*gremial*) and territorial ? And what are the immediate (failure of a particular action) or structural (heterogeneity of the popular sectors) factors which disrupt this convergence and slow down political polarization ?

Close study of the conditions and the impact of the urban revolts should allow us to answer these questions and to begin to speci-

fy the main features of the popular movement. It should also
raise the question of the importance of the workers' movement
in cities where it does not constitute the main nucleus of the
popular movement, inasmuch as it is seen to be giving it a sense
of direction. At the same time, the urban masses do not seem to
be acting more autonomously except in the context of convergent
actions towards other dimensions of the popular movement.

V. Regional and National Movements

Finally, it may be useful to discuss the question of urban move-
ments in relation to the larger sociopolitical processes which
characterize Latin America today. In a number of countries, the
State is subject to attacks from movements which go beyond sec-
toral actions carried out by class blocs '(*bloques de clases*) and
must be seen in a perspective of social transformation, as in
the case of Central America. It is difficult to recognize here
the organic presence of urban movements acting autonomously;
but neither can it be denied.

The regional movements, which assume an increasing importance
in several countries, support the constitution of such class
blocs :   regional strikes and municipal stoppages in Argentina,
in Bolivia and in countries where regional specificities are
important.[15]

In the last five years, Peru has witnessed the emergence of a
large number of regional movements. This is quite clear in the
case of Amazonia where regionalist opposition to a centralized
State has provoked a struggle for a better redistribution of
national resources, of the economy and of political power in
favour of the most neglected provinces. Important social move-
ments have brought together the whole of the population of the
Selva zone, asking for regional control of economic activities
and an improved administrative infrastructure. They had a multi-
class dimension and brought together local personalities, pro-
fessional organizations and expressions of various class seg-
ments. In addition to their programmatic objectives, they re-
present a questioning of the structure of internal colonialism,

a demand that power should be regionally based and indigenous voices be listened to, and a defense of poverty stricken, exploited masses. In Amazonia, both these masses and the dominated elements of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy are concentrated in a few cities where there is a serious shortage of housing and of stable employment.

The participation of the urban masses in this sort of movement modifies their municipal or regionalist orientation, giving greater weight to the urban socio-economic problematic.

Regionalist movements have also emerged in certain Andean provinces where the regional dimension is less important; its leading elements are the peasant or mining unions and the neighbourhood federations. The motor of the popular dynamic comes from the urban neighbourhoods and includes students, professionals and shopkeepers. When cities or even entire provinces are paralyzed during relatively long periods of time, there are violent confrontations with the local bases of State power.

Finally, social movements develop around the main urban-industrial centres. Here the movements are more working class in character and it is the trade unions which provide the initiative for the formation of regional fronts. But its evolution is dependent upon its capacity to draw the urban masses and their representative organizations into the movement. The class blocs here are less multidimensional in character and these movements may engage predominantly in strike actions or popular protest.

There is more to these movements than opposition to central power and a celebration of regional power. To understand the vitality of their mobilization processes as well as the prospects for the emergence of regional power blocs, we must gain some insight into the configuration of local class segments. They do not constitute long term class alliances, neither are they the bearers of specific historical projects; however, they do constitute a social force which is able to impose partial

modifications to certain administrative and redistributive prac-
tices. To the degree that the impoverished masses concentrated in
the urban centres participate in these movements to a significant
extent - indeed they sometimes make up a majority of those invol-
ved - then we may legitimately see them as an expression of the
urban movement.

When dealing with national processes that are more advanced be-
cause they are oriented towards a historical transformation of
the society, we must examine the configuration of social move-
ments as they may be able to contribute to the overthrow of the
regime and the subsequent seizure of power.[16] Nicaragua is a par-
ticularly useful case where such an analysis can bear fruit, as
we find that during its struggle against the Somoza dictatorship,
the Sandinista army was able to obtain the support of the most
significant parts of the popular classes and of certain elements
of the dominant classes. If we recall that the general offensive
was launched shortly after the Managua earthquake, that this was
followed by a deep depression which sharply lowered living stand-
ards and by massive corruption which had an enormous impact on
the urban masses, we are in a better position to understand the
strong radicalization which took place in the popular neighbour-
hoods - particularly affecting the youth - and we can better ap-
preciate its importance in a context where the working class is
relatively small. Impoverishment, repression and urban scarcity
provided the ferment which allowed the participation of the urban
masses in the seizure of power.

El Salvador is more urbanized and industrialized than Nicaragua,
and it boasts a complex network of organizations and urban de-
mands which run parallel with the armed struggle.[17] As a result,
the popular neighbourhoods are in a position to play not only a
military role but also to sharpen the level of sociopolitical
polarization. In Bolivia, on the other hand, where a popular-
democratic government has set itself the goal of restoring eco-
nomic growth and reconstituting the State apparatus, while at the
same time trying to hold the social movements at bay, it is worth
paying close attention to the behaviour of the urban masses as

they have demonstrated a strong capacity for mobilization in the past during times of political crisis.

In all these situations, the urban masses are an integral part of those processes which govern the formation of class blocs, the mode of opposition to conservative political power and the emergence of new projects of social transformation. Far from being passive observers, they play a role which makes it possible to speak of the urban dimensions of regional and national processes and the social movements associated with them.

This discussion of social movements based on an identification of five types of movements provides the beginning of an analysis but leaves many questions unanswered.

What, we may ask, is the continuity between these different forms of mobilization of the urban masses? The subjects of the action are the same, whether they are participating in land invasions, formulating urban demands, responding to the economic or the urban crisis through higher levels of mobilization or engaging in political struggles. But this is by no means a normative sequence. These actions all have different significance. And awareness of engaging in a common popular struggle does not fit in with fragmented sociopolitical processes.

In what sense are these urban movements? First, in the sense that they imply active participation by the urban masses. Secondly in that their territorially based organizations are involved in determining the direction of the struggle. Third, because of the mobilizing effects of urban contradictions, or at least of social contradictions which become more visible in an urban context. Having said that, it remains extremely difficult to sort out the specific character of the various forms assumed by the popular movement. To understand its objectives and modes of operation, we must go beyond sectoral analysis and look at the dynamics of the process as a whole. In any case, it is no longer possible to discuss the urban movement in terms solely of opposition to the urban policies of Latin American States.[18]

To what degree are they social movements? It seems that we are

witnessing the emergence of subjects who are endowed with their own base of support within the social dynamics, and whose actions are articulated with other dimensions of the popular movement. Their organic character varies from one to the other. However these movements seem to be responding to crisis situations rather than acting as the bearers of a project of historical transformation.[19]

NOTES

1. I have had direct experience of the Chilean and Peruvian situations.

2. See in particular the arguments put forward by Manuel Castells, Jordi Borja and others based on French, Italian, Spanish and Canadian experiences as well as those of dependent countries.

3. Manuel Castells, *Luttes urbaines* (1972) and *Changer la ville*, Elements pour une théorie.

4. See in particular David Collier, *Barriadas y elites: de Odria a Velasco*, I.E.P., 1978.

5. These differences have been analyzed by Etienne Henry, *Urbanisation dépendante et mouvements sociaux urbains*: analyse comparative des expériences de Lima et Santiago-du-Chili, doctoral thesis (3e cycle), EHESS/Paris V, June 1974.

6. Alfredo Rodriguez and Gustavo Riofrio, *De invasores a invadidos*, I y II, Lima, DESCO, 1970 and 1978.

7. See the works of Jorge Montano, Diana Villareal, Oscar Nuñez and others.

8. (translator's note) *"Movimientos reivindicativos"* can be translated as movements that make insistent demands. In practice however, what distinguishes them from territorial movements is that they are issue-oriented, as defined by the author, usually in relation to urban services and amenities. We have therefore used the term "issue-oriented movements".

9. On the topic of private urban development (*urbanizaciones*), see Gonzalo Bravo, *Movimientos sociales urbanos en Quito: el Comité del Pueblo*, FLACSO, 1980.

10. (translator's note) In order to differentiate between *"demanda"* and *"reivindicación"*, we have translated the former as "request" and the latter as "demand" which in English has an imperative, insistent connotation.

11. See CIDAP, *Movimiento de Pobladores y Centralización*, Lima, 1980.

12. See Grupo José Raimundo Rossi, *Lucha de clases y derecho a la ciudad*, Ediciones 8 de junio, Bogotá.

13. This has been demonstrated by Jose Alvaro Moises in *Čontradiçao urbana e movimentos sociais*, Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra/ CEDES, 1977.

14. For a detailed description of those events, see *La guerra de los cuatro reales*, Ediciones El Conejo, Quito, 1980.

15. See for example the analysis of the Cordobazo put forward by Francisco Delich in *Crisis y Protesta Social*, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 1970, for a discussion of the Argentinian case. For Bolivia, see CERES, *Formaciones y movimientos regionales en Bolivia*, La Paz, 1982.

16. See Daniel Camacho, *Les mouvements populaires et la tâche des sciences sociales dans le développement de l'Amérique latine*, colloque NOM, 1983.

17. See Mario Lungo, *Las reivindicaciones urbanas de El Salvador*, CIUDAD, Quito, 1980.

18. As I had advocated in *La escena urbana*, Lima, PUCP, 1978.

19. This is a way of reformulating the criteria for analyzing social movements suggested by Alain Touraine in various texts.