

URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: THEORY AND PROJECT

"They can in no sense be regarded as agents of their own destinies," Perlman (1976:261) wrote about *favelados* in her well-known *The Myth of Marginality*. Elsewhere in the book she underlined the point, stating that:

The favelado who says he "has a voice in government decisions" or can "do something to influence the government" is not more efficacious, more modern or more competent as a citizen; he is simply more of a fool, more effectively blinded by the rhetoric of the government and less in touch with his own reality. It is a tribute to the favelado's common sense that this group is a tiny minority (Perlman, 1976:190).

These assessments of the political propensities of *favelados* derived from a study in which Perlman took issue with then current theories regarding *favelados* as marginal, i.e. not integrated into "the system." In her study, she argued that they should not be regarded as a "marginal" group, but rather as a repressed and exploited part of a social system. Their political conduct does not derive from a lack of integration which, as some hoped and others feared, might propel them into radical "adventures," but from their dependent integration. Rather than being prone to radicalism of any sort, the urban poor are political conformists, something which reflects their powerless and dependent position within the system. They obligingly play the role the system assigns them. In the populist era, especially the 1950s and early 1960s, when the system asked for votes, the *favelados* voted, and when populist politicians wanted local organizations, they formed Residents' Associations. Under the authoritarian regime after the 1964 military coup, the system demanded acquiescence and apathy, and the *favelados* were quiescent and apathetic. So not much is to be expected from the urban poor:

Since it seems that the present military regime in Brazil is unlikely to be overthrown from without, or undergo radical changes from within, the poor will doubtless continue to be subjected to policies which sacrifice their own interests in protecting the power, wealth, and privilege of the upper sectors. Although their discontent and

bitterness may grow, their position of powerlessness is sufficiently evident that it is unlikely they will take any futile risks (Perlman, 1976:240).

The verdict had hardly been given, when the urban poor seemed to be stricken with an acute loss of common sense. In 1978 the Cost of Living Movement, "made up mostly of the poor from the outskirts of the big cities," played a leading role in the "fight to win back the streets as an arena for political expression," as Kucinski (1982:63-64) put it.³ A few years after the publication of Perlman's study, the introductory chapter of the pioneering anthology *São Paulo: o Povo em Movimento* (Singer & Brant, 1980), sponsored by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese, started by stating that:

A large part of the studies of the urban popular classes in Brazil is dedicated to explaining their absence from the political scene and from the great social clashes. This book deals with their presence. New a

ctors had entered upon the scene (Sader, 1988) and their performance was accompanied by a rapid proliferation of studies on these "new social movements," extolling their autonomy and potential impact as political actors. "What is new in the urban popular movements," Nunes and Jacobi (1982:195) wrote, "is that they do not submit themselves any longer to cooptation, to a subordinated participation," and Oliveira (1977:73-75) argued that these movements did not address themselves "to the state" anymore, but "against the state." Others nurtured similar expectations about the transformative potential of the "new (urban) social movements," the horizon of whose struggles, given the highly exclusionary system of domination and appropriation of riches, would not be restricted to the parameters of a capitalist society (Moisés & Martinez-Alier, 1977:52; cf. Kowarick, 1987; Boschi & Valladares, 1983:70). Evers, Müller-Plantenberg and Spessart (1979), though sometimes expressing some caution, gave reason to think (cf. Kowarick, 1987:45) that they actually foresaw a rather linear development of what they regarded as another form of the class struggle:

The steady lowering of the level of reproduction creates the increasing necessity as well as the objective conditions for a unification of demands and the articulation of ever broader coalitions (Evers, Müller-Plantenberg & Spessart, 1979:163).

Some ten years later, by the late 1980s, the mood of the "(new) urban social movement" studies had changed: "Nearly a decade after the initial wave of opti-

³ The Cost of Living Movement emerged from Ecclesial Base Communities, Mother Clubs and Neighborhood Associations in the periphery of S-ao Paulo. The first initiatives were taken in 1973 and by 1978 the movement was able to gather about 1,250,000 signatures for a petition for a price freeze and wage adjustments. The mobilization was accompanied with large public manifestations and meetings (Evers, 1982).

mism, it has become apparent that the earlier expectations have not been borne out" (Mainwaring, 1987:132). Nascimento (1987:26) argued that defining urban social movements in terms of their transformative nature "has the inconvenience that in Brazil observations and research do not seem to confirm this," while Gohn (1988) commented on the changing frame of mind of students of the "urban social movements" that:

In recent years we are becoming accustomed to studies on the popular movements of an autocritical nature. They present a series of justifications for the causes which impeded the movements from fulfilling the tasks with which they had been attributed in the 1970s. The usual explanations are that the students at that time held utopian views and that the state has undergone a reformulation during the 1980s.

What actually takes place is a dislocation of analysis from the real. In our view, the social movements in general, and the popular (movements) in particular, did not advance sufficiently to bring about substantial transformations, nor ruptures or the emergence of the new, not because scientist have been utopian or ingenuous, but because the movements did not manage to give a sense to the hegemonic crisis of that moment (Gohn, 1988:332).

Telles (1988) reflected upon the same issues in her essay on the experiences of the 1970s. What is the importance today of reflection on the popular movements that emerged in the periphery of the city -São Paulo- in the 1970s? She noted the "barely disguised disappointment in the face of an unrealized promise" and observed how many people started to reveal the "other face" of the movements, thus dismounting the hope vested in them or, at least, making it necessary to rethink their political significance.⁴ And then she commented that

If the emphases have changed and if new problems emerged, demanding theoretical and political reflection, this is nothing extraordinary, quite the contrary. The problem arises when the new questions are being perceived as constituting such a rupture with the past that we end up dissolving the threads which link the present to its own history. In this way, to take up the initial question, the experiences of the 1970s are frozen as objectified data from the past, at best remembered as examples from the "hard years of resistance"

⁴ Telles (1988:247) supplied the following list of practices said to constitute the 'other face' of the movements: "the localism of practices which exhaust themselves in a routine of pressure on the public organs so as to obtain attendance to specific demands; the fragmentation of interests and the preponderance of a corporatist notion of rights; their isolation in a certain type of communitarianism which, however, does not impede them from opening themselves to populist manipulation by the state; the affirmation of a basism which has its counterpart in the rejection of forms of political representation and in an instrumentalist view of institutions."

which generated practices and orientations that made sense then, but now have lost their reason for being. And there also is the risk to take the data from the present for proof or measure of the truth of what now has become enshrined as the past. In this case the analyses of the first interpreters are disqualified, since what they said can be attributed to the ingenuous optimism of those who let themselves be seduced by their object or who took for reality things only happening in the interior of their own imagination (Telles, 1988:248-249).

However, even if the emergence of the "new urban social movements" in Brazil was not merely taking place in the utopian or ingenuous imagery of social scientists, and if today's "truth" should not be projected onto the past, the foregoing quotes suggest a complicated process of rethinking the "urban social movements" and settling accounts with the theorizations that had accompanied their rise.

1.1. Theory as a discursive matrix

The problems of "interpretation" derive from the particular relation of the social sciences to their "object," i.e their reflexive character, or "the practical connotations of social science" (Giddens, 1984:348; Taylor, 1983). The theorizations of "urban social movements" developed in Brazil in the 1970s also outlined a political project and a course of action:

the potential radicality ascribed to neighborhood associations derived (and derives) from theoretical and political perspectives which take urban life and the sphere of reproduction to be the locus of a second front of social struggle, besides those which develop in the sphere of labor (Ribeiro, 1989:106).

The theorizations were not only a means of understanding, but also provided a framework for self-understanding for the newly emerging "urban social movements."

Social theorizing may "enter" its very object and thus contribute to the reflexive transformation of the object (Taylor, 1983). This certainly takes place through many mediations and filtrations, which may be traced, located and situated in their specific context, as this study proposes to do. The point here is that theorizations may become what Sader (1988) has called a "discursive matrix," a resource which can be drawn upon:

Discursive matrixes should be understood as modes of approaching reality, involving diverse attributions of meaning. They, consequently, also imply the use of specific categories of naming and interpreting (of situations, themes, actors) with reference to specific

values and objectives. But they are not simply ideas: their production and reproduction depends on material positions and practices from where the discourses are enunciated (Sader, 1988:143).

Elucidating the concept, Sader argued that in the course of social struggles the subjects involved elaborate representations of the events and of themselves. In such elaborations of meaning, they have recourse to constituted discursive matrixes from which modes of naming the lived experience are extracted, but at the same time, through the very use of such "given words" in the context of conflicts and antagonistic interpretations, they operate changes in the meaning of these words.⁵

One aspect of the above conjectures is that they serve as a justification for bracketing the concept of "urban social movement," which so often tends to be "reified" (Banck and Doimo, 1988:72). Bracketing the concept allows us to analyse such processes of "reification" at work and to highlight the role of theorizations of urban social movements as a discursive matrix which enters into the very constitution of "its world," with "tortuous and ramified consequences" (cf. Giddens, 1984:350).

The Brazilian discussion on "urban social movements" has, certainly in its early stages, been closely linked to the "object" of its concerns. "Theoretical problems" that came under scrutiny, were quite often not just theoretical problems, but "theoretical problems of the popular movement" (e.g. Lima, 1982:54) worked out through the discursive matrix of "urban social movement" theory which articulated with, and served to specify the "discursive matrixes" of Liberation Theology and the dispersed Left in pursuit of a new relationship with "its base."⁶ The theorizations of "urban social movements" can thus be seen in their double relation to neighborhood associativism, as a discursive matrix for "understanding" as well as a medium for "self-understanding," or as theory as well as project, subject to constant redevelopment.

⁵ These formulations bring him close to the discourse-theoretical approach elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) but avoid the "discourse reductionism" of their framework by explicitly taking into account the situatedness of the enunciator (cf. Assies, 1990:55-58; Salman, 1990:118-129; Stuurman, 1985).

⁶ Sader (1988: 144-145), referring to S-ao Paulo, discusses three "discursive matrixes," related to three "institutions in crisis," namely the Church which was losing influence among the people; the Left which sought new forms of 'integration with the workers' and the trade-union structure which was confronted by the novo sindicalismo, stressing autonomy in the face of any state tutelage. The latter discursive matrix is less manifestly present in Recife than in the industrial heartland of the country.

A corollary of the bracketing procedure is the rejection of "essentialism."⁷ I use the notion of "neighborhood associativism" as a "catch-all concept" indicating the broad range of territorially-based associative practices related to "urban contradictions" (cf. Assies, Burgwal & Salman, 1990:4, 170). Neighborhood associativism should not be understood as something preceding maturation, as a sort of raw material in a temporal sequence, but as processed "in and by" various more or less conflicting discursive and organizational matrixes that frame and influence it. By organizational matrix I mean the forms of organization and the broader networks within which neighborhood associativism operates.⁸

Forms of neighborhood associativism can thus be understood as social constructs shaped by the interaction of various actors, including the adversaries and the "external agents" whose presence and impact should be taken into account at all moments, rather than subsequently be added to the analysis as a complement to what is viewed as an essentially internal "spontaneous" dynamic.

The theorization of "urban social movements" that emerged in the course of the 1970s came to serve as a discursive matrix in shaping neighborhood associativism. It provided the groups most involved with promoting neighborhood associativism, as well as local leaders, with a theoretical perspective and a more specific program of action. It served, as a framework for defining "strategic interests," to borrow a term from feminist literature.⁹ The theorizations of "urban social movements" served to specify and modify the the Catholic discourse of "human promotion," with its existentialist and developmentist leanings, as well as the orthodox marxist discourse. While forms of neighborhood associativism had existed earlier, they now came to be understood and signified as "urban social movement."

By the end of the 1970s, a counter-matrix was articulated in governmental circles. In the context of the transition to government by civilians, the military government started to devise strategies to diffuse the conflict potential in urban areas. The core concept of this counter-matrix for neighborhood associativism was "communitarian development" with "the nation" -the community as the "essence of

⁷ Non-essentialism does not imply simple contingency "without history." Though "metanarratives" or "philosophies," which served to anchor "essences" and their immanent rationalities -the "cunning of history"- have become obsolete, large historical narratives and analyses of societal macrostructures, though less presumptuous than "metanarratives," are indispensable for critical social theorizing (Fraser and Nicholson, 1988).

⁸ In the 1970s the Catholic Church and its Ecclesial Base Communities provided the main organizational matrix. In the course of the Brazilian democratization process, organizational alternatives became feasible, and state agencies also started to promote neighborhood associations. At the same time, the possibilities for organizing within the Church framework narrowed as a consequence of the conservative offensive against Liberation Theology.

⁹ Strategic interests are "deductively derived from the analysis of situations of subordination and the formulation of alternative, more satisfactory arrangements to those that exist" (cf. Alvarez, 1990:24).

the nation"- rather than "the people" or the "working classes" as point of reference. On the other hand, by the early 1980s, the rather consensual understanding of what "urban social movements" were, could be and should be, started to fissure for reasons I shall discuss in due course.

Thus rather than come up with a new definition of what "urban social movements" really are, I thematize the "practicality" of the notion as the core of a discursive matrix. In order to understand its workings, I discuss the main features of the theorization of the "new urban social movements" developed in Brazil in the mid-1970s to coalesce into what can be called "the paradigm of the 1970s" (Assies, 1990:73) and digress on conceptualizations of the "novelty" attributed to the "new urban social movements." By the early 1980s, the "paradigm of the 1970s" fractured. A series of key notions underpinning the "paradigm of the 1970s" were thoroughly questioned, not just for purely theoretical or conceptual reasons but also with respect to their practical implications.

1.2. The "paradigm of the 1970s"

While neighborhood associativism had existed at other times in Brazil, the conceptualization of neighborhood associativism as "urban social movement" did not emerge there until the mid-1970s. The notion itself had been produced a few years earlier in Castells' books on *The Urban Question* (first published in 1972) and on *Urban Social Movements* (first Spanish¹⁰ edition in 1974) and in Borja's (1975) book of the same name. Lojkin's book on *Marxism, the State and the Urban Question* (published in 1977) was the third source of inspiration for what may be called "the paradigm of the 1970s" (cf. Assies, 1990:28-42, 73-77). The impact of these authors in framing the initial discussion in Brazil can hardly be overestimated. A "phenomenon" that "had existed for some time" (Valladares, 1988:295) acquired a new name and it was this very name that gave the phenomenon a new dimension, namely that of a project of "social movement."¹¹

¹⁰ We refer to the title of the Spanish edition. Significantly, the original French title, reflecting Castells' structuralist marxism of that time, was *Luttes Urbaines et Pouvoir Politique* (cf. Assies, Burgwal & Salman, 1990:2).

¹¹ The emergence of forums of academic discussion on the topic of "urban social movements," such as the meetings of the *Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais* (ANPOCS) and its workshop *Movimentos Sociais Urbanas*, later renamed *Lutas Urbanas, Estado e Cidadania* (Gohn, 1985:32; Doimo, 1989:43), greatly contributed to the specification and reappraisal of the concept in the context of broader discussions and trends within social theorizing (e.g. the eclipse of structuralist marxism and the rethinking of theories of democracy), always with reference to the "concrete" Brazilian situation.

Jacobi and Nunes (1983:62) highlighted one strategic aspect of this process in their discussion of how Castells was appropriated by his Brazilian public. They contrasted it with his European and North American public:

Here, his perception of the relation between the contradictions of capitalism and the urban was worked out in texts with other addressees: fundamentally it was a critique of the "elitist" positions of the orthodox and/or revolutionary Left, suggesting a "third way" of action, between "populism" and "insurrection" or between "social democracy" and "bureaucratic socialism."

While "urban social movement" theories served to criticize the orthodox left, they also provided a framework for radical elaboration of the discourse and practices of the Catholic Church. In the 1960s, the Church had launched its strategy of creating Ecclesial Base Communities as a means of combating the crisis of vocations, the eroding influence among the population and the onslaught of other religious orientations. This new strategy soon acquired a dynamics of its own, as the more official Church views on human promotion through communitarian action tended to be redimensioned in terms of "social movement" under the influence of Liberation Theology. Church-sponsored neighborhood associativism, which provided an "umbrella" for the radical Catholic undercurrent and dispersed Left-wingers¹² under the repressive climate of the time, now became more than a second choice option, forced by circumstances. Taking these aspects into account, provides an analysis perspective capable of shedding light on the relations between modifications in theory and political conjunctures (cf. Jacobi and Nunes, 1983:63). In this respect, it should be noted that a fracturing of "the paradigm of the 1970s" occurred in 1982-1983 (cf. Doimo, 1989:2). It was related to a moment of inflection of the political conjuncture in Brazil, a moment of Church reorientation and a shift in social theorizing and was accompanied by a redimensioning of the notion of "urban social movement."

The "paradigm of the 1970s" consisted of a blend of the theories of late dependent industrialization or peripheral capitalism and its political dimensions, and the "urban social movement" theories that became available in the course of the 1970s. A core idea was that in a situation of peripheral capitalism, "urban social movements" were to play a particularly prominent role in the anti-capitalist struggle. The main features of the "paradigm" can be summed up as follows:

¹² The opening up was accompanied by theological debate. Whereas the idea of Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) was initially often linked to rather exclusivist views on the "specifically Christian", which holds that the specific communitarian values of Christianity are only accessible to Christians, such "monolithism of the religious dimension" was contested by Liberation Theologists with the argument that "outside faith it is possible to find the universal gift of love," which opens the way for greater political involvement and a more autonomous relation to the Church hierarchy (cf. Nunes & Jacobi, 1982:191).

1. Urban (social) movements¹³ are generated by urban contradictions, notably the incapacity of the capitalist state to provide items of collective consumption in any satisfactory way (cf. Castells, 1977:234-242).¹⁴ These contradictions are exacerbated under conditions of "savage capitalism," or "accumulation on a poor basis" in the periphery of the capitalist system. The state is concerned with improving the conditions of production, above all investing in infrastructure for industrialization. Provisions for collective consumption for the rapidly growing urban population lagged way behind (Moisés & Martinez-Alier, 1977:45; Moisés, 1982);

2. The orthodox view of urban contradictions as "secondary" to the class struggle was criticized as Eurocentric. There is no reason, it was argued, to disqualify the Brazilian urban movements for not meeting the standards of the "classical" model of social movements, that is the model of working class struggle in the sphere of production. Latin American reality, as Moisés (1982:24-29) put it, has its own dynamics and Brazilian urban movements should be understood as a specific product of the "situation of dependency" which exhibits two important differences from the "classical" model. The first is that a situation of "dependent" capitalism does not give rise to a working class characterized by homogeneity deriving from the position on the labor market. In that respect, the situation is characterized instead by structural heterogeneity and the development of an amalgam designed as the "popular classes" (cf. Weffort, 1978:146).¹⁵ Secondly, the social movements developing in such a context are paradoxically united at a political level. Instead of labor movements whose unity derives from solidarity at the shop-floor level, Moisés (1982:26) argued, in Latin America "we have popular movements whose unity is constituted on the basis of something like a *popular identity*" forged in the context of populist politics. Such politics propagated the ideology that the state is there "for everyone" and thus legitimized the state as a

¹³ Though Castells (1977:260-275; 1983:284, 322) always sought to distinguish urban social movements from urban movements in general, in Brazil the term urban social movements came to be applied to virtually all forms of neighborhood associativism which, in any case at the time, nearly always had connotations of subversion.

¹⁴ Castells (1974; 1977:451) specified the main urban contradictions under state monopoly capitalism in the central capitalist countries as follows: 1. whereas the importance of collective consumption increases as a result of economic necessity as well as of the development of the class struggle, capitalist investment policies privilege the private consumption sector; 2. whereas ways of life are a private concern, collectivization of their management becomes increasingly important. These contradictions give rise to an increased presence of the state in the management of urban contradictions and, therefore, to a direct politicization of the urban problematic.

¹⁵ In this respect it should be noted that Castells's (1977) notion of "pluriclassism" can not simply be transposed to Brazilian "reality." For Castells it refers to alliances between well-defined classes or class fractions rather than to "structural heterogeneity."

target for demand-making. The popular sectors thus find their unity at a directly political level and ultimately the relation to the state becomes one of confrontation.

Arguments of this kind about tendencies in the emergence of the "popular sectors" as an historical actor served to stake out the potential importance of struggles in the "sphere of reproduction," which was very much in contrast to the orthodox disqualification of these struggles. This point was also stressed in a very influential article by Evers, Müller-Plantenberg and Spessart (1979), who argued that in the Latin American conditions of "associated industrialization" of the 1970s, such struggles could be regarded as trade union struggle with other means.

3. The novelty of these "new urban social movements" was first defined by contrasting them to the neighborhood associations of the populist period in terms of "autonomy" and the rejection of populism and clientelism as inauthentic forms of representation (Nunes & Jacobi, 1982:195; Singer, 1980). This stress on autonomy derives from the influence of the Catholic Church through its Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) and from a definition of autonomy in terms of a marxist class analysis, often inspired by Weffort's analyses of populist mass politics, significantly republished in 1978. These elaborations of novelty and autonomy imbricated with the critique of vanguardism and focism among the Left, resulting the pursuit of new forms of "integration with the base" and a "discovery of civil society" (Weffort, 1988)¹⁶ which converged with the grassrootism of the Liberation Theologists. Although the two discursive matrixes often merged to a great extent, particularly for those Catholics who came to regard marxism as a useful instrument for the analysis of reality, their relation is complicated and often fraught with tension, as I will show in the analysis of neighborhood movements in Recife. As Sader (1988:164-165) pointed out, the notions of "liberation" and "revolution" occupy the "same space" in their respective discursive matrixes. Both point to a "totalizing event which subverts and refounds social life on the basis of notions of justice activated by the people in action." However, in contrast to "revolution," which is rooted in "empirically observed events in the past and concretely programmed for the future (whatever the degree of 'irrealism'),"

"liberation" does not permit operationalization through any strategic rationality. And this is why its manifestations in the experience of daily life (regarded as indicating the direction) are not so much the large collective processes which affect social structures but rather the "awakening of consciences" and the development of practices through which every small collectivity feels itself to be the "subject of its history." The central objective is not the

¹⁶ Forced by the repressive circumstances and as a result of theoretical reflection strongly inspired by Gramsci's writings, the Left discovered that there is a place for politics "beyond the state."

establishment of a new structure but, above all, the establishment of new meanings and values in human action, the priority goes to the valuation of the development (*promoção*) of the individual, which takes place in the bosom of the communities.

These two perspectives on "social transformation" have their counterparts in sometimes complementary and converging and sometimes contrasting conceptualizations of what the novelty of the "new (urban) social movements" is all about, a contrast between those who assess "novelty" in terms of socio-political change and those who stress the socio-cultural dimension.

1.3. Excursus: What's new?

The "novelty" of the "urban social movements" in Brazil has been approached from various angles. Their novelty can be staked out by contrasting them to the neighborhood associations of the populist period. Another aspect of their novelty may be the new relationship to left-wing parties, and they can also be regarded as new with respect to the "new values" they are said to represent. I shall briefly discuss the main features of populism theory and how the "new urban social movements" were contrasted with those of the populist period. Subsequently, I shall discuss the new "movementism" of the Left and examine some aspects of the approaches stressing the socio-cultural dimension.

In the Brazilian context, Weffort's (1978) essays on populism provide a major reference and I shall therefore focus on this theorization. Weffort situated and specified¹⁷ populism as an urban phenomenon in the context of a "society in transition" to industrial capitalism after the crisis of the oligarchic model in the 1930s. This crisis ushered in a "compromise State" rather than a real break with the oligarchy. As a "bourgeois revolution," it was a poor one "but we did not have and will not have another one" (Weffort, 1978:22). None of the fundamental classes were capable of exerting hegemony and this resulted in a great relative autonomy of the State and the "leader" identified with it. The "compromise State" is one of perpetual trade-offs between the interests of various dominant groups while simultaneously concessions are made to the dominated groups, i.e. the emerging urban masses, to enhance the legitimacy of the State. In the context of a "society in

¹⁷ As such, the notion of populism as a mode of political regulation or political regime elaborated by Weffort (1978) should be distinguished from the conceptualizations inspired by the Russian 19th-century *Narodniki* tradition of 'going to the people', which has its parallels in Brazilian Catholic as well as secular radicalism (Kadt, 1970:5). It should also be distinguished from the general theory of populism worked out by Laclau (1977), which hinges on the distinction between 'people' and 'power bloc' and seeks to legitimize 'populism' as a strategy of left-wing hegemony. For Laclau as well as Weffort, the theorizations of 'Bonapartism' and the particular forms of 'relative autonomy of the state' are a backdrop reference.

transition" and the accompanying rapid growth of heterogeneous urban popular classes, the dominated groups are available for populist policies of manipulation through concession. Weffort stressed that this should not be attributed to a lack of political experience on the part of the rural migrant population in an urban context, but to the specific sense of mobility and the feeling of improvement these migrants experienced. In a context of this kind, which opens new employment opportunities and makes new forms of consumption accessible, migrants tended to regard the rules of the social and political system as legitimate. Simultaneously, they can identify themselves with populist politicians who operate in the space provided by the hegemonic stalemate between the dominant classes. The emerging urban masses thus do not play an autonomous role, but serve as a "mass of maneuver" in the hegemonic struggles between dominant groups. However, the effects of this form of mass-politics are ambiguous, Weffort argued, since favors distributed by politicians can assume the dimension of acquired rights and may thus subvert the system of populist regulation. The popular classes claim their rights and start to play a more autonomous political role and eventually turn against the state. This development was cut short by the 1964 *coup*.

While Weffort thus outlined the "emergence of the popular masses" as a political actor, his analysis of populism also informs Perlman's (1976) study and her conceptualization of dependent, conformist participation, which is much less optimistic about these political actors:

During the populist period, the favela participated in the power game between competing segments of the national elite. In Weffort's words, the masses "conferred legitimacy upon a Populist leader -and through him on the state- insofar as they served as an instrument which was particularly useful when no one of the dominant groups had hegemony over the rest." The underlying dynamic constructed by populist politicians consisted of playing off the masses' desire for mobility against the oligarchy's fear of revolution. To the oligarchy, they could promise to keep the masses in check; to the masses they could claim the ability to win concessions from the elite. Manipulation of this basic conflict made populist politicians "mediators" and left them free to "wheel and deal," consolidate power, and "line their own pockets" (Perlman, 1976:260).¹⁸

¹⁸ Perlman's views on dependency and dependent participation, it should be noted, inspired a line of interpretation of Latin American neighborhood movements which includes the recent work by Castells (1983:175-212) and his concept of "urban populism." The nation states of the developing countries, he argues, are caught between the political pressures from the traditional oligarchies and the new international economic powers at a time when the popular masses increasingly forward political claims to broader participation. As a result of their vulnerability, however, the urban population and its movements remain dependent on the political system.

The neighborhood associations emerging in Brazil in the 1970s seemed to break away from the pattern of dependency sketched by Perlman. The pioneers of the Brazilian "urban social movement" studies, whose work started to circulate through informal circuits by the mid-1970s, measured the novelty of the "new urban social movements" by the distance from dependent participation. The notion of autonomy, in relation to the state and the established political parties, which played a key role in the public discourse of the new movements themselves, derived its significance from an extrapolation of the tendency towards autonomization Weffort had referred to as a main reason for the breakdown of populist regulation in the early 1960s. The development that had been cut short in 1964 now resumed with new force. In his pioneering study of the *Sociedades de Amigos de Bairro* (SABs) in São Paulo in the 1950 and 1960s, Moisés (1982) thematized the possibility for such a development. The SABs, he argued, had been called into existence for purposes of electoral gain by populist politicians, but had tended to become more autonomous and more antagonistic to the state. Singer (1980) ventured similar views. After the *coup*, he argued, the SABs had been hollowed out and had lost significance for the population. This vacuum was gradually filled by new associations closely linked to the Ecclesial Base Communities and

rooted in an ideological position completely different from that which inspired the movements of the previous decade. Instead of assuming that the needs of the peripheral *bairros* and impoverished populations stem from the negligence of the authorities, and that this might be overcome by an adequate mobilization of the interested parties, privation is attributed to the very social organization inherent in capitalism (Singer, 1980:91).

Moreover, by then, populism, which had been related to the phase of import-substituting industrialization, could be regarded as a past station. The new phase of associated dependent industrialization, accompanied by grim authoritarianism, left little leeway for the ambiguities that characterized the previous phase (Evers, Müller-Plantenberg & Spessart, 1979:140). Antagonism was virtually the only imaginable possibility and, many surmised, a transition to socialism the only solution.

The conjectures underpinning such views often bore a resemblance to the European theoretizations of State Monopoly Capitalism which, in its official French version, informs the work of Lojkine (1981)¹⁹ and, with structuralist

¹⁹ Lojkine, in particular, adhered to the STAMOCAP theory and argued that the original opposition between owners of the means of production and direct producers, in this phase of capitalism, had been replaced by a new opposition, this time between the dominant fraction of capital -monopoly capital- and the totality of non-monopolist 'layers'. In the European context, this argumentation had the convenience of conflating democratic struggles with the struggle for socialism, as both were directed against the

marxist qualifications, the work of Castells (1977) (cf. Assies, 1990:28-42). Oliveira's (1977) article on *Monopolist Accumulation, the State and Urbanization: the New Quality of Class Conflict*, which was "indispensable reading" at the time (Doimo, 1989:43), went quite some way toward developing a local variety of the State Monopoly Capitalism theory, including a definition of "the urban" as the "anti-nation" and a description of the state as "captured by the international-associated bourgeoisie." This dissolved "the ambiguity of the State, which is the foundation for the very possibility of the State" (Oliveira, 1977:73), which amounts to saying that the State had now been pitted against the nation. Theorizations of Bureaucratic Authoritarianism (O'Donnell, 1973; Collier, 1979) also suggested that the relationship between economic development in the periphery and the development of democracy might be the opposite of what modernization theorists had promised (Cammack, 1985:5). Whereas in the central capitalist countries, the STAMOCAP theory served to underpin an electoral "democratic front" strategy, there might at least be some doubts as to the viability of such a strategy in the context of dependent capitalism, which did not even seem to provide a very propitious environment for "bourgeois democracy."

In this view, to sum up, the new neighborhood associations represented an ideological break with those of the populist period. At the same time, the State had lost the ambiguity that characterized it during this period. While the new neighborhood associations vindicated their autonomy, their relation to the State in the new phase of industrialization could only be one of confrontation. The conceptualizations were framed in terms of class theory adapted to the Brazilian circumstances, featuring the notion of autonomous action on the part of the popular or working classes taking charge of their authentic interests.

While the "new movements" were thus viewed as representing a break with populist manipulated participation, the way they might autonomously take charge of their authentic interests and how these interests might be expressed politically was another matter for heated debate. It involved the critique of the "traditional Left," its vanguardist and instrumentalist attitudes to grassroot organizations and its exclusive preoccupation with "taking power." The critique was inspired by multiple sources, ranging from the Christian humanism of Liberation Theologists to the international debate on leftist politics and Eurocommunism, the Latin American debate on the perspectives of the Left after the *guerrilla* experiences, and the international debate on "new social movements." The views developed by the secular Left converged with the communitarianism and direct democratism of the Church and Liberation Theologists (cf. Cardoso, 1981; Munck, 1989:146) in a

'monopolies and their state'. In Brazil, Oliveira (1977:73) wrote that "now the state and the international associated bourgeoisie are on one side and the rest of the nation on the other."

strong leaning toward *basismo* and *movimentismo*, the emphasis on "new ways of doing politics" and notions about "politics beyond the State."

Some argue, however, that this emphasis on "new ways of doing politics" and the shift from "partidarianism" to "movementism" still does not capture the novelty of the "new movements." They refer to the socio-cultural aspect as the most important. Such conceptualizations draw on notions of alienation, blended with chunks of Foucault and his notion of power, and on the theorizations associating "new social movements" with the emergence of post-industrial society. The departure from the conceptualization of novelty discussed above partly parallels the difference between "Liberation" and "Revolution" cited by Sader (1988:165) (see 1.2.).

Evers (1985:46-47) pinpointed the difference when he argued that Latin American scholars erroneously "perceived this tendency toward taking politics into one's own hands as a broadening of the sphere of 'the political'":

Together with the emergence of new fields of political action, corresponding new ways of "doing politics," alongside the associated new political agents, started to emerge. According to this line of interpretation, the intellectual task for today consists in "thinking the construction of a new hegemony through direct action of the masses, undertaking a reconceptualization of politics that broadens its realm and recovers as valid action the vast popular field with its everyday life, thus accepting the challenge of visualizing a project of society from the viewpoint of the practice of the popular classes." Instead of a "*partidarista*" viewpoint, a "*movimientista*" standpoint is called for.

This line of interpretation hinging on the "broadening of the sphere of the political," Evers argued, does not go far enough in the search for new concepts, as it maintains the idea of the centrality of politics and the notion that power is the only or most important potential for social transformation we can find in these movements and groupings. His main thesis then is that the "transformatory potential within new social movements is not political, but socio-cultural" (Evers, 1985:49). New social movements all over the world, he argued, create spaces for the experience of more collective social relations, of a less market-oriented consciousness, of less alienated expressions of culture and of different basic values and assumptions. Their quest is for an autonomous identity rather than for political power and:

a movement's increased potential for political power can carry with it a decrease in its long term socio-cultural potential. More power means, almost invariably, less identity, more alienation (Evers, 1985:65).

Such notions have strong affinities with those informing Catholic communitarianism and its stress on primary social groups, which allow for personal development

through open and personal relations with other persons and with the official doctrine, which relegates temporal politics to the private sphere.

If Evers' (1985) theorization of novelty is rooted in a good German tradition of alienation theories, the valuative elements in his conceptualization coincide in many ways with those in the theorizations that link "new social movements" to the emergence of a "post-industrial society" regarded as a qualitatively new societal type. This conceptualization partly derives from Bell's (1973) theory of post-industrial society and Touraine's (1973, 1978) further theorizations of this concept, with ramifications in the work of Melucci (1980, 1985), Lyotard's (1979) post-modernism and Castells' (1983) post-marxism (cf. Assies, 1990:42-68). These authors tend to regard the emergence of the "new social movements" as indicative of the emergence of a qualitatively new type of society where, as Featherstone (1988) resumed it, the development of commodity production coupled with information technology has led to a "triumph of signifying culture," which then reverses the direction of determinism.²⁰ The social movements in this type of society, which in Touraine's (1978) terms has reached the "highest level of historicity," are beyond the material and political concerns of the old movements and move on a socio-cultural level. For Touraine²¹ the emergence of "new social movements" indicates the emergence of new "system of historical action" which has attained the "highest level of historicity" located on an evolutionary scale (cf. Cohen, 1982:32) going from struggles at the level of organization (commercial society), through the level of institutions (industrial society), to the level of historicity in post-industrial or programmed society. These societies have reached the highest capacity for intervention upon themselves, i.e. for "self-production," and in these societies cultural orientations are directly at stake. Therefore they enter the "age of social movements" (Touraine, 1978:149). These "new social movements" are beyond material concerns and political involvement. Meaning, identity and culture are topographically located above

²⁰ The theoretical move indicated by Featherstone is reminiscent of the structuralist-marxist argument about the "displacement of dominance to the political" in the monopolist phase of capitalism. The shift to post-industrialism implies a "qualitative jump," however, which generates a "new" class conflict between "technocracy" and "self-management" directly involving the socio-cultural level (Touraine, 1978). Touraine's notion of class, it should be noted, is rather specific and the adoption of his terminology by Castells (1983) has not taken place without considerable "conceptual slippage" (cf. Assies, 1990:77).

²¹ We abstract here from his world-system differentiation whereby the application of the very notion of "social movement" in the context of developing countries is undercut. In such a situation of development, according to Touraine's definitional framework, social movements, which by definition pertain to the synchronic functioning of a "system of historical action," cannot constitute themselves as a result of the heterogeneous composition of the developing societies and as a result of the nearly inevitable political involvement in the context of development, i.e. is the diachronic transition to another "system of historical action" of a higher level. What matters at the moment is the "foundation" of the criteria of novelty (cf. Assies, 1990:85-87).

matter and power. The new movements are above all expressive, symbolic or prophetic (Melucci, 1980; 1985:797), involved with safeguarding "identity" and producing "meaning" in the wastelands of the post-industrial society. The "movement is the message."²²

An example of the transposition of such notions to Brazilian "reality" can be found in the article by Boschi and Valladares (1983:74-75), who assimilated the Brazilian movements to those described by Melucci (1980) as expressing the new class struggle of post-industrial society, i.e. the defense of identity against technocratic domination. Perspectives of this kind tend to assimilate Ecclesial Base Communities and Brazilian neighborhood associations into a "global" *problematique* of "post-political" and "post-materialist" movements.

The problem with these transpositions can be illustrated with the criteria used by Mainwaring and Viola (1984:19) to distinguish between "old" and "new" social movements in Latin America:

"New" social movements are inclined towards affective concerns, expressive relations, group orientation and horizontal organization. Old social movements are inclined towards material concerns, instrumental relations, orientation towards the state, and vertical organization.

They listed five types of movements which they regarded as new in the Brazilian and Argentinian context: the base communities, neighborhood associations, the women's movement, ecological associations and human rights organizations. By their criteria the neighborhood associations, often state-oriented in the pursuit of material values, scored lowest on "novelty."

One problem is that in these views on "novelty," the "expressive dimension risks overwhelming the instrumental purpose," as Lehmann (1990:64) put it. In other words, these criteria of "novelty" reflect an "overdynamization of the cultural" (Assies, 1990:67, 85) as the locus where it all happens nowadays, resulting in a sovereign neglect of "matter and power." The socio-cultural is represented as something disembodied, nearly sacralized, hovering above the material world. Movements engaged in material and political issues are regarded as "old" and lower on an evolutionary scale. Meddling with such things implies a lowering of the "level of historicity" and a "loss of identity."

This brings us to a second aspect of Mainwaring and Viola's criteria of "novelty." In their article, they seek to assess the contribution of the "new social movements" to the democratization processes in Brazil and Argentina. At the same

²² Similar notions underpin Castells' (1983:311-314) valuation of "meaning based on experience," which he regards as being nurtured in the local community, presented with strong *Gemeinschaft* connotations (Banck & Doimo, 1988:83; Banck, 1990). A sort of secular base communities, also stressing "experience" and the affective dimensions of life (cf. Mainwaring, 1986:228) and nurturing a hope of eventual liberation (Castells, 1983:331).

time, "state orientedness" is regarded as characteristic of "old" social movements. By definition, the potential contribution of "new social movements" to the democratization process seems to be restricted to "civil society" and "the cultural." This reflects a problem noted by Cohen (1982, 1985), namely the tendency to exclude the strategic interaction aspect from the concept of social movement in recent theorizations, notably in the influential work by Touraine (1973, 1978).

Cohen (1982, 1985) noted, and the argument not only applies to Touraine but to various other authors (e.g. Evers, 1985, Castells, 1983), that this approach forces a choice between "strategy and identity," which is then resolved by excluding the aspect of strategic interaction from the concept of social movement as well as from the concept of civil society where social movements are located. While this view makes for a healthy critique of the Jacobin imagery of social transformation and corrects the overemphasis on politics and the State, it also suffers a major flaw. It precludes thinking about the relationship between social movements, social change and its institutional dimensions. It suffers from a blind spot where the relationship between civil society and the state, that is the political regime, is concerned. This also is the case with Castells (1983)²³, who simply presupposes the existence of an open political system (Assies, 1990:59; Salman, 1990:129-139).

Lowe (1986) points to this aspect in Castells' recent work (Castells, 1983). The reason for Castells' new insistence on political autonomy, Lowe argues, arises from a new reading of the social system reliant on social process, meaning here personal and group interaction, to achieve changes in value and meaning systems. It is not very clear, however, how urban movements may achieve these tasks of social change, since Castells' theoretical position entails a full separation between social movements (civil society) and the political system. This, Lowe argues,

leads to the ambiguous conclusion that although these movements can innovate social change, they themselves cannot carry it through to a transformation of society because this depends on adaptations at the political level (Lowe, 1986:190).

Therefore, he goes on, it is not clear whether in practice urban social movements can be autonomous if they are to achieve the tasks Castells, by definitional fiat, assigns them. Lehmann, addressing the same issue, remarks that:

unable to get around the state and its biases (Castells) has withdrawn in civil society, calling the social movements up as an alternative, but also perhaps as a sign of despair. Since justice is unobtainable,

²³ "Without political parties and without an open political system, the new values, demands and desires generated by social movements not only fade (which they always do, anyway) but do not light up in the production of social reform and institutional change" (Castells, 1983:294).

will people have to content themselves with expressive, rather than instrumental, politics? (Lehmann, 1990:64)

The focus on "the socio-cultural" certainly is an important antidote to economism or overpoliticization, but dissociating it from "the political" or presenting "the political" as its negation is another matter. Framing the issue in terms of an opposition between strategy and identity not only runs the risk of thinking identity in essentialist rather than relational terms, but also results in evading the question of how alternative institutional arrangements might be developed to give practical shape to new cultural orientations. It precludes thinking about these issues (cf. Assies, 1990; Salman, 1990).

In the Brazilian context, in the discourse of the "new urban social movements" and their theorists and pedagogues, the rejection of involvement in institutional politics of the communitarian-identity discourse, with its strong affinities with aspects of Catholic thought, intertwined with the revolutionary rejection of involvement in "bourgeois" political institutions, sometimes including the wholesale rejection of parties as "ideological apparatuses of the state," as Ruth Cardoso (1983:223) noted with some dismay. Other authors have similarly commented on the problems and limitations, if not paralyzing effects, of the "new social movement" discourse in the broadest sense of the term, when it comes to political democratization (Barros, 1986; Cardoso, 1981; Munck, 1989:146). The anti-institutional consensus, reinforced by the authoritarian regime leaving left little leeway for anything but expressive manifestations of "civil society against the state," came under scrutiny in the context of the changing political conjuncture.

1.4. A paradigm fractured

For a number of reasons the "paradigm of the 1970s" underwent a multiple fracturing in the early 1980s. From this fracturing, a new and far more complex and differentiated image of the Brazilian "urban social movements" emerged. In contrast to the previous rather unitarian view, it involved an exploration of their internal contradictions, of the variety of actors involved in their constitution rather than "spontaneist" conceptualizations, and of their relations to the state and the political system rather than the simple confrontationist view. The theoretical reorientation was precipitated by the political conjuncture which, by 1982, had demonstrated that the growth of movements arising from the contradictions of capitalism in Brazil was not as linear as some had thought.

These developments coincided with the growing theoretical critique of the marxism that had informed earlier theorizing, a discussion which revolved around the rejection of the view of individuals as "supports of structures." For a brief period, "identity"-oriented research became prominent:

By 1982/83 a line of interpretation of culturalist leanings gained ascendance which, as a critique of the economism/reductionism of the preceding model, went out in search of the meaning of these practices in the context of their proper "experience." Thus, through a conceptualization referring to the sociology of daily life and the notion of identity, the social movements emerged as "a new type of conflict potentially indicating social transformation and a radical renovation of political life," through their aggressive profile of contestation of populism and clientelism as well as by their self-representation as autonomous subjects, independent from the political parties and the state (Doimo, 1989:2).

That is only part of the story, however. The shift to "identity" and "revolution in daily life" studies also served to keep up hopes at a moment when the "popular movement" and the party representing it -the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT)- had not performed as well as many had expected in the 1982 elections. Some felt the "socialist perspective the theme (of urban social movements) had been introduced with, had been barred" (Jacobi & Nunes, 1983:66). Turning to "culturalism" made it possible to relegate social transformation to the future and to simultaneously maintain that, at a local level in the movements, this future was in the making. The optimistic overtones of this type of research were questioned soon thereafter, however (Doimo, 1989:2), resulting in new assessments of what the Brazilian "urban social movements" were and could be about.²⁴

This process of rethinking was closely related to the ongoing process of political reorientation in the broadest sense of the term, in Brazil at the time. While a transition to socialism had turned out to be less imminent than many had expected, there was no longer any doubt that there was indeed an *abertura democrática*. The rigorously dualist interpretative schemes enshrined in the "paradigm of the 1970s" rapidly lost credibility, legitimacy and "practical" use (Cardoso, 1988:459).²⁵ Dualisms, ultimately rooted in some "dual power" theory, as in the rather manichean opposition between "planning" and "social movement" (e.g. Castells, 1977; Borja, 1975), lost legitimacy with the "reevaluation of democracy" by the European and Latin American Left. The often rather nebulous imagery of "social transformation" as a cataclysmic event, underpinning the dualism and much of the conceptualization of what the "urban social movements" were

²⁴ Contributions to these debates can be found in: Scherer-Warren & Krischke (org.), (1987).

²⁵ "The pedagogy of the movement, in the sense that it simplifies reality to the extreme (to favour the perception of oppression), creates conditions for a simplified, dichotomous apprehension of reality, with tendencies to radicalism.

This can be an obstacle for the real political action of the popular movement, particularly in a conjuncture which also is complex...." (Lima, 1982:58).

about, was crumbling (Munck, 1989:1-21; Telles, 1988: 281; Weffort, 1988). The problem was now how to go about the "revalued democracy" in practice (Cardoso, 1981; Barros, 1986).

A further development which deserves attention is the changing relation between the Church and the "popular movement," which partly was related to the political conjuncture:

The weak performance of the PT at the 1982 elections, not only stunned the political neophytes. For the elite political class, they brought the relief of knowing that the Church of the bases did not constitute such a menace or required as much attention as they had imagined. For the CEBs and the intellectuals of the Church of the People, they necessitated a profound reappraisal of their position in the face of the new political order and of the Church as a whole (Della Cava, 1988:258).

The electoral outcomes, however, were not the only reason. In the 1970s the Church had provided much of the organizational matrix for the popular movement. The 1980s brought the "emancipation of the social movements from the *pastoral*" (Doimo, 1986:112). It was a contradictory²⁶ process involving the disengagement of the Church which increasingly turned to its "cultural mission" rather than become involved in secular politics. In the general context of the "Retrenchment in Rome" (Lehmann, 1990:144), in Brazil the relation between Ecclesial Base Communities and the party system became an issue, notably in regard to the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), the "only party which had grown out of the grassroots" (Della Cava, 1988:251; Lehmann, 1990:147). Among the progressive sectors of the Church, the awareness had also grown that they were not the "organic intellectuals of the popular movement," as some had come to think. This involved the pursuit of a new relationship of commitment to the popular movement. The emergence of the *assessorias*, the non-governmental organizations "at the service of the popular movement" which had in the majority of cases their roots in the Church organization, was an outcome of this two-sided process (Landim, 1988).²⁷ These developments were paralleled by a secularization of neighborhood

²⁶ Much of the discussion revolved around "autonomy." People active in party politics often meant autonomy from the Church. Church-related people might agree on autonomy from the Church, but also tended to argue for autonomy from parties or to at least be wary of the "instrumentalization" of movements by the parties. Autonomy was thus often an eminently strategic term which might well be a means of securing informal "hegemony" over local organizations or over the supra-local articulations which operate in (relative) autonomy from the Church and the party system.

²⁷ NGOs and their personnel "move in a triangular field" constituted by the Church, the parties and the universities, according to Fernandes (1988). They function by maintaining a relationship of relative autonomy to these three poles. With the process of *abertura* under way, the field tended to become quadrangular as the opposition, some of whom had found refuge in such NGOs as an alternative of committed professionalism, came "to power" in an increasing number of states and municipalities.

associativism, influenced at the same time by the changing political conjuncture, including the reanimation of party politics since 1979 and changes in the policy style of state apparatuses.

These developments provided the background and perhaps the conditions for more distantiated studies of the "new urban social movements" and certainly contributed to the impact of these more critical studies within the Brazilian community of students and theorists of "urban social movements."

In a seminal contribution to the debate, Ruth Cardoso (1983) argued that Brazilian "urban social movement" studies often ended by reaffirming the transformative potential of the neighborhood associations without, however, providing empirical sustenance for such an affirmation. In her article she questioned three aspects of the novelty ascribed to the post-populist urban movements, namely:

1. that they question the authoritarian state and oblige it to democratize
2. that they force a recognition of the presence of the oppressed
3. as new political actors they put themselves beside the parties and trade unions and exert a renovating influence since they have the capacity for autonomous intervention in the correlation of forces.

In response to the first thesis, she argued that it could hardly be sustained. The state apparatuses had been modernized, although this had hardly been taken into account in the Brazilian studies, where the state appears in bare outline as the authoritarian enemy.²⁸ Nevertheless, the state has come to recognize neighborhood associations as interlocutors and demonstrates greater flexibility in dealing with their demands than the studies suggested. Conversely, the state is not only "the enemy," but is simultaneously legitimized as a valid interlocutor. Rather than frontal opposition, there is often a dynamic of negotiation where state agencies and their representatives as well as other actors can alternately be friend or foe, as illustrated in Santos' (1981) pioneering account of urban movements in Rio de Janeiro. At the same time, however, the overall policies of the state are beyond the scope of the associations. As to the second point, the "presence of the oppressed" has certainly been affirmed. By recognizing neighborhood associations as interlocutors, however, the authoritarian government also found mechanisms for

²⁸ Cardoso draws the important distinction between two types of problems which appear as one: 1. the transformation of the economic role of the state and the consequent centralization of decision-making and 2. the authoritarian government and the repression of traditional forms of expression of popular demands. As a corollary of the first point, she remarks that the development of public policies of the modernized state may actually generate demand-making, whereas the second point hints at the distinction between state and regime. Though under an authoritarian regime discourses aimed at delegitimizing the regime are likely to emerge in any manifestation of civil society, they should not be understood as delegitimizing the state as such, she would later argue in an article that covers much of the same ground as the earlier one (Cardoso, 1987:30).

fragmenting and separating them. In abstract ideological terms, associations can find their unity in the face of the state, since everyone lives in the same poverty, but at the same time they compete amongst themselves when it comes to concrete demands. Their demand-making character and the form of response by state agencies promote dispersal and fragmentation and thus sets a limit to the capacity for wide-ranging transformations. Dealing with neighborhood leaders also meant the (authoritarian) government avoided dealing with political forces proper, such as parties, which might contest the functioning of the state as a whole. Where the third point is concerned, she argued that the movements may exert an influence reducing the hierarchical character of parties and trade unions, but they can not replace them.

While this served to tune down the great expectations about the "new urban social movements," the manicheism underlying the "paradigm of the 1970s" was directly confronted in an article by Machado da Silva and Ribeiro (1985). They questioned the type of analysis which *a priori* conceives the political process as consisting of two opposed camps:

The political process -political struggle or "politics" *tout court*- is the conflict between those two camps, the result of which is not conceived of as a synthesis which transforms both, but as the dilution of one through the victorious intervention of the other (either the social movement is absorbed (*engolfado*) by the institutional system and disappears in it or, contrarily, -and this is the desired outcome- the institutional system is destroyed by the social movement (Machado da Silva & Ribeiro, 1985:327).

The notion of political process, they argued, is absent from such studies, which is detrimental to the analysis. Where the dynamic of movements is concerned, it "internalizes" the perspective, since it tends to focus on the internal dynamics of collective manifestations. This has its counterpart in a monolithic representation of the state. The notion of political process should therefore be given serious substance, they argued, and in this context, though with the qualification that domination is not limited to the institutional system, they referred to Boschi's (1983; cf. Boschi, 1987:23-39) view that the most promising destiny of a social movement is "the transformation and broadening of the institutional system to incorporate new actors and to become more democratic" (Machado da Silva & Ribeiro, 1985:327).

A third influential critical contribution was Durham's (1984) discussion of the generation of new models of citizenship as a dynamic process taking place in social movements. The latter "constitute a specific form of popular mobilization with a space of their own, different from that occupied by parties and unions" and are the "space where needs are transformed into rights." In her essay she linked up with some remarks made by Cardoso (1983) on the notion of "community" and

worked out a distinction between a "formal" model of organization and a "communitarian" one, to which she devoted most of the attention.²⁹

The communitarian model is one of direct democracy. It rejects institutionalization and requires the permanent participation of everybody in decision-making processes and in the execution of decisions. Thus it strongly emphasizes the notion of *equality* in the constitution of the collectivity. A "community of equals" is constituted with reference to a specific negativity, a collective need, a *carência comun*, ranging from the absence of asphalt to the feeling of being discriminated against in some general way. Equality in the face of a specific negativity thus proceeds through the concealment of other positive inequalities and heterogeneity. In these ways, a space is created for the concrete experience of community and equality, where individuals can be recognized as persons and subjects in a public rather than private sphere. "Inside" the community, people "learn to speak" and this generates new representations of the person. This is reflected in their actions "toward the outside," whereby they are social movements in the full sense of the word rather than sects. Thus they constitute new channels of communication between the individuals, society and the state. It implies that they legitimize the state as interlocutor and *vice versa*, generating new forms of citizenship and new conceptions of the attending rights in the process. The legitimation of the state is accompanied by an appraisal of those in power by the standards of the rights the population feels it is entitled to.

The communitarian model thus contributes to the generation of citizenship, but it also has its limitations. Durham argued that the internal dynamics have their limitation in that they are restricted to small groups. Such groups seem to be unable to develop mechanisms for the coexistence of divergent opinions and positions, as is illustrated by the constant processes of scission. The constitution of "community" not only means that differences³⁰ are covered up, but that they are delegitimized as a theme of public discussion. They tend to crop up in an "informal space" of slander, personal accusations and manipulation. The public face of the community remains one of equality, unity and consensus, but one should be aware that it conceals another dimension which is as much part of "community" as the experience of equality. It should not be romanticized and one should be aware that quite authoritarian mechanisms for imposing consensus may develop in these restricted spaces of democratic experience that fail to develop mechanisms to manage divergence. Moreover, the difficulty in institutionalizing (or even

²⁹ Though the "communitarian model" is often regarded as the more popular and the more democratic, Durham notes that the "formal model" is equally part of the popular cultural patrimony.

³⁰ Durham also referred in this context to the issue of the "external agents" (priests, left-wing militants, etc.) who become "part of the community." What matters here are the mechanisms she described.

admitting) representative mechanisms may promote parochialism, corporativism and particularism. Community has various faces and should be neither idealized nor disparaged.

An issue both Durham (1984) and Cardoso (1983) touched upon is the role of "external agents," such as priests, sympathetic left-wing activists or engaged professionals, which was often concealed by the imagery of communitarian equality and spontaneous activity of the "base." The role of these "agents" came to be increasingly recognized as crucial to the development of the Brazilian "new urban social movements" and they should be regarded as part and parcel of the process of social construction of these movements. Bringing its mediators into focus, one might say, was one of the preconditions for a critique of the reification of the notion of "urban social movements," that tended to take place in earlier studies.

These three contributions to the debate addressed various questions forcefully put on the agenda in the context of the changing political conjuncture of the 1980s, namely the forms of political representation and the role of "urban social movements," the relation between movements and the State and the possibilities and limitations of direct democracy. At the same time, the static dualist perspective and the reified conceptualization of "movement" and "state" gave way to a processual approach, not only where the relation to the adversary, the state, is concerned, but also where the relation to allies or "external agents" is concerned.

1.5. Bringing the state back in

The fragmentation of the "paradigm of the 1970s" ushered in a shift of focus to the relation between "urban social movements" and the institutional system (Doimo, 1989:2; Jacobi, 1987), a development related to the dissolution of the image of "exteriority of society in relation to the state" in theoretical as well as practical terms (Telles, 1988:281). In practical terms, state agencies had become more flexible in dealing with the demands of neighborhood associations, which brought the issue of "public policies" into view. In theoretical terms, the "re-evaluation of democracy" undercut the dual-power perspective which informed the "paradigm of the 1970s." In practice the two issues tend to converge in the process of "democratic transition," as the opposition, albeit gradually as in Brazil's protracted "transacted transition" (Share & Mainwaring, 1986), comes "to power" and may seek to democratize "public policies."

The policy changes that started to take place in the late 1970s, particularly in the area of "social policies," required assessment. Mainwaring (1987:152) described this development as a paradox. The very success of the movements in

challenging traditional political practices, he argued, eventually led the movements to become more exposed to these traditional practices:

When the movements first emerged, the authoritarian regime generally ignored or repressed them. As the grass-roots movements expanded and the electoral process became more important, however, the state was forced to develop a strategy to respond to them. At this point clientelistic policies became more widespread (Mainwaring, 1987:152).

A neo-populism and clientelism emerged, he argued, but despite the cases where such policies succeeded in demobilizing movements or creating more conservative parallel movements one should not simply interpret this as evidence of the impotence of the movements. Cooptation of an established movement implies some exchange between the state and the movement. Viewed in this light:

the attempts to construct populist or clientelist mechanisms represented a victory for the urban popular movements. These movements helped force the authoritarian regime to redefine its political strategy (Mainwaring, 1987:152).

Though this certainly indicates an important aspect of the development, others have pointed to the "qualitative changes that took place inside the public bureaucracies and their repercussion on the process of interaction with the increasing social demands" (Jacobi, 1987:25; Cardoso, 1983). In other words, it was not just a return of the old clientelism. These authors drew attention to the process of modernization the State had undergone in the period of Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism.³¹ The implementation of social policies of any sort, even executed by a traditionally authoritarian state, requires some sort of interrelation with the population (Boschi & Valladares, 1983; Cardoso, 1983; Doimo, 1989:2). The fracturing of the dualist perspective opened the way for more differentiated analysis in terms of the relation between "urban social movements" and "public policies" (e.g. Jacobi, 1989; Somariba & Afonso, 1987). Rather than simply a revival of populism and clientelism, though these aspects were certainly important, it was a political response processed through modernized state apparatuses.

The change in the state machinery was linked to broader societal developments in the 1970s and intertwined with the rise of the Brazilian "new middle classes" and new professional groups, or "the bureaucratization of Brazilian society," evident in the rapid growth of administrative and technical-scientific

³¹ This view of the state links up with the notion that in the course of capitalist development, the state increasingly loses its aspect of a simple "bourgeois state," if ever it simply was one, to become a bourgeois-dominated state strongly imbricated with "the economic." As the state has increasingly become a primary source of dynamic for the monopoly-dominated capitalist economies, the state rather than production becomes a principal focus for class conflict and the issue of democracy acquires a new relevancy (cf. Carnoy, 1984:171, 259; Cardoso, 1988:457).

professions in the economically active population from 11% in 1960 to 19% in 1980 (Boschi, Diniz & Lessa, 1989:39). I shall highlight the role of segments of the "new middle classes" in their role of "articulators and mediators" of social demands (Oliveira, 1988). The "external agents" on the side of neighborhood associations and the "technicians" in state bureaucracies share a common class position professional outlooks and in the course of a democratic transition, today's "external agents" may be tomorrow's state "technicians." The role of the "new middle classes" has been rapidly enhanced in the period of authoritarian modernization, and it is worth devoting more specific attention to this development, its dynamics and repercussions.

These considerations bring into focus the committed professionals without whom the Brazilian "new urban social movements" would never have been what they are, the "external agents" whose role was obscured for quite some time by the spontaneist and autonomist discourse "the movements" presented themselves with. Whether as "catalysts" or as "resources" for local initiatives, priests, social workers, doctors, architects, lawyers and other professionals often played a crucial role in the development of the Brazilian "urban social movements." Taking the role of the new middle classes as "articulators and mediators of social demands" into account may also shed light on the dynamics of change in the state apparatuses when the authoritarian government rapidly lost whatever legitimacy it had left on the eve of the transition to civilian rule.

1.6. Urban social movements, democratization and institutional innovation

The shift in focus to "public policies" imbricated with the "re-evaluation" of democracy and the tendency to regard the state as an internally differentiated complex of apparatuses constituting "arenas of struggle." This view of the state as not capitalist or bourgeois in essence, but as capital or bourgeois dominated, implies a re-evaluation of notions like cooptation and autonomy, since the monolithic and reified conceptualization of the reference -the State- has crumbled. If the results of political processes are to be conceived of as a synthesis which transforms both, or perhaps even more, parties involved, as Machado da Silva and Ribeiro (1985) argued and if, as they also argued, this perception opens the way for an assessment of these transformations in terms of positive or negative impact, this implies a reappraisal of the "institutional system" which can no longer be regarded as the simple negation of "social movement." This brings into focus the issue of institutional innovation in the context of "democratic transition," particularly where the role of "social movements" in the democratization of "public policies" is concerned.

"Democratic transition" means a change of political regime, i.e. of the institutional arrangements that structure the relation between state and society which, if adherence to democracy as such is to be taken seriously, must be differentiated from the "pact of domination" giving sustenance to the state (cf. Cardoso, 1988:460). "Democratic transition" minimally involves a restoration of the institutions closed down or marginalized by an authoritarian government, such as elected representative bodies. Beyond that, it may involve institutional restructuring and experimentation, or the devising of new institutions allowing for an extension of democracy in the sense of increased pluralism or the incorporation of a greater number of actors in the decision making system as well as in the sense of a more substantial democracy (Calderón & Dos Santos, 1989). Presenting the issue in a polarized fashion, Calderón and Dos Santos argued that when confronted with processes of institutional experimentation, the interesting thing to know is whether they are the fruit of innovative orientations of collective action or merely institutional adaptations in conditions of crisis and/or change of regime, required by the political system to secure its governability.

This is quite a departure from the perspective of the "paradigm of the 1970s." Castells (1977:260-275), for instance, opposed planning, regulation or participation to social movement, as its negation. In that vein Carvalho (1987) *a priori* dismissed "participative planning" in the context of a capitalist state as an "organic form of cooptation of the subaltern classes" without allowing for any margin of variation. Participative planning, he argued, is the top-down promotion of parallel channels of representation which marginalize the broader and more fundamental channels like parties or trade unions. It "keeps popular autonomy from organizing itself, to learn through the practice of self-government to construct a government." Can state personnel, Carvalho wondered, mobilize the local population to participate in oppositionist parties like the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), the *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (PMDB) or the *Partido Democrática Trabalhista* (PDT). Such questions do not even have to be posed, he argued, because "what sense would participation mobilized through a coercive power, as the executive, have?" (Carvalho: 1987:35). Such questions, however, inevitably had to be asked when the opposition came to occupy executive posts in the course of the "democratic transition."

This recent turn to a focus on the institutional dimension, as it took shape in Brazil, often tends to emphasize transformations in the state apparatuses in the course of modernization. In this view, "social movements" constitute themselves in response to the spaces of direct interlocution opened by the state itself, rather than autonomously in any simple way. The movements, however, exhaust themselves in the periphery of the state apparatuses and their scope and impact is limited since their own tendencies to fission and fragmentation are exacerbated by the dispersion promoted by the state (Cardoso, 1983).

Thus the view that *a priori* dismisses "participative planning" converges with the view that refers to the limited scope and impact of "urban social movements" in citing political parties as the proper channel for either revolution or participation. A contrast to these views is provided in practice by the attempts of progressive administrations, mainly at the municipal level, to seek the "participation of the organized social movements of civil society." Instead of promoting dispersion, they seek to promote aggregation by opening spaces for direct representation of such movements so that they may interfere in the broader formulation of municipal policies, for instance through "popular councils" functioning alongside and conceivably in competition with the municipal council. This holds the promise of expanding the impact of "social movements" beyond the generation of citizenship through an increased capacity for topical demand-making, while remaining relatively independent from party politics.

In some smaller municipalities, experiments in new forms of participation and municipal administration already took place in the 1970s, constituting, "patches of light in a dark forest" (Nunes & Jacobi, 1982:185; Grossi, 1989:117-120, Souza, 1982). In the context of the "democratic transition" there was a gradual rise in the number of such experiments (cf. Grossi, 1989:120-123). The municipal elections of 1985, the first under a civilian government, opened up spaces for new experiments on a larger scale, of which the experiment in Recife was regarded as a pioneering and relatively successful one. After the 1988 elections, the newly elected PT administrations in São Paulo and other cities embarked on similar experiments in "popular administration" and "participation of social movements." In these cases the question posed by Calderón and Dos Santos (1989) whether these experiments are the fruit of innovative orientations of collective action or internally generated adaptations of the political system gains pertinence and I shall use their distinction as a guideline in discussing the experiments in Recife between 1985 and 1988.

1.7. Concluding remarks

It is significant in itself that by the mid-1980s, left-wing municipal administrations like the one in Recife talked about the "participation of the organized social movements of civil society" in the administration of the municipality (Prefeitura/SAC, 1987). This illustrates the extent to which the social movement discourse had entered political and everyday speech. "Social movement" had become a meaningful political interpellation. In the foregoing review of the Brazilian discussion of social movements, I have shown how the concept underwent a substantial reconstruction through theoretical reflection with strongly recursive aspects. The discussion of "new urban social movements" has always demonstrated a close and often manifestly pedagogical relation to its object, though this tended to

be concealed and could only be appraised after the crumbling of the dualist framework revealed the diversity of actors involved in shaping Brazil's "new urban social movements." I have argued that the theoretization of "urban social movements" can be usefully understood as a discursive matrix which articulated with and specified the discursive matrixes of the dispersed Left and Liberation Theology, eventually coalescing into what can be called "the paradigm of the 1970s." Through such articulation, it provided a framework for the shaping of neighborhood associativism in a specific way, namely as "new urban social movements" in project.

Neighborhood associativism has been introduced as a "catch-all concept." It refers to the wide range of territorially-based associative practices related to "urban contradictions." I have no qualms about using the notion of "urban contradiction," provided it is stripped of any connotation of immanent historical rationality. Urban contradiction, for operational purposes, can be detected in the tendency to relegate the "urban poor" to less valuable areas of a city through the operation of the land-rent mechanism, resulting in an increasing distantiation from the employment opportunities they depend on for survival. Another important urban contradiction involves the classic issue of collective consumption, the public services required for the reproduction of the urban population and (expected to be) supplied by the state. In operational terms, these contradictions broadly indicate the two main themes of neighborhood associativism in Recife, the issue of land use and the demand for public services. The process through which these contradictions become themes for neighborhood associativism is one of many mediations and rather than problematizing the notion of urban contradiction and eventually conjuring it away through deconstruction, it is interesting to focus on these mediations (Salman, 1990:129).

It is at this point that the more specific discursive and organizational matrixes which concretely shape neighborhood associativism come into the picture. Neighborhood associativism indicates a variety of practices and social constructs shaped "in and by" diverse discursive and organizational matrixes involving a variety of actors, rather than "spontaneously" sprouting from a contradiction. The discursive matrix of urban social movement theory contributed to the shaping of the Brazilian "urban social movements" through its articulations with Liberation Theology and the dispersed Left in the 1970s. This "practical" dimension was at the source of the reification of the notion of "urban social movement" in the late 1970s.

The deconstruction of the "paradigm of the 1970s" revealed, in addition to the local population, the variety of actors involved in the production of Brazilian "urban social movements." "External agents," whose presence had been concealed by the communitarian spontaneist discourse, turned out to be omnipresent (Durham, 1984:30). It is then usually recognized that the Church or left-wing militants played an important role "at the service of the popular movement," as they themselves

would say (Landim, 1988). The active role of these "agents" is hardly acknowledged. In the case of the Church, Doimo (1989:4) argued that at best there are some references to its action as "external agent," "mediator" or "social articulator," but that its role as -peculiar- political subject is concealed, for instance, by the valuation of spontaneity, "anchored in the rejection of vanguardism and populism." This brings into the picture the role of the Church as institutional actor and as organizational matrix with its own dynamics. Other "external agents," such as Non Governmental Organizations or *assessorias* "at the service of the movement," may similarly be brought into focus to explore their role in the construction of Brazilian "urban social movements."

Besides the institutional dimension, the professional dimension should also be taken into account in assessing the role of the "external agent." Besides clergy, often trained in social sciences, we find lay social workers, some of whom are in the service of Church agencies, and lawyers, doctors, architects and engineers. Their involvement can include solidarity actions through their professional organizations. Professional ethics and its policies can be a basis for adherence to the cause of "urban social movements" and a medium for their impact within state apparatuses through the delegitimation of clientelism (Jacobi, 1989) and a critique of authoritarian (Arcoverde, 1985) or technocratic practices (Cornely, 1985). Social workers, usually familiar with if not steeped in social movement discourse, are a case in point and Sposati (1988: 275) highlighted some of the issues involved when she wrote that:

We can affirm that during the 1970s in the city of São Paulo the municipal social work bureaucracy sought the bases for its social recognition. This is the fundamental feature of this period. Underlying this movement for recognition is a basic question involving the identity of the agency, that is to say, the identity of the social worker in the context of governmental action in a historical period marked by the rearticulation of the forces of Brazilian civil society.

Taking such processes into account will serve to provide greater insight into the dynamics of processes of delegitimation and attempts to restructure state apparatuses and the opportunities they provide for "urban social movements" in the process of "transformation of both poles."

The social production of the Brazilian "new urban social movements" has thus been theorized as a multilayered complex process, and I have outlined the main features. The approach emphasizes the process of articulation of disperse elements or "experiences," involving diverse actors, rather than starting from an "internal" perspective and subsequently introducing the external dimension (Bader, 1991:44-45).

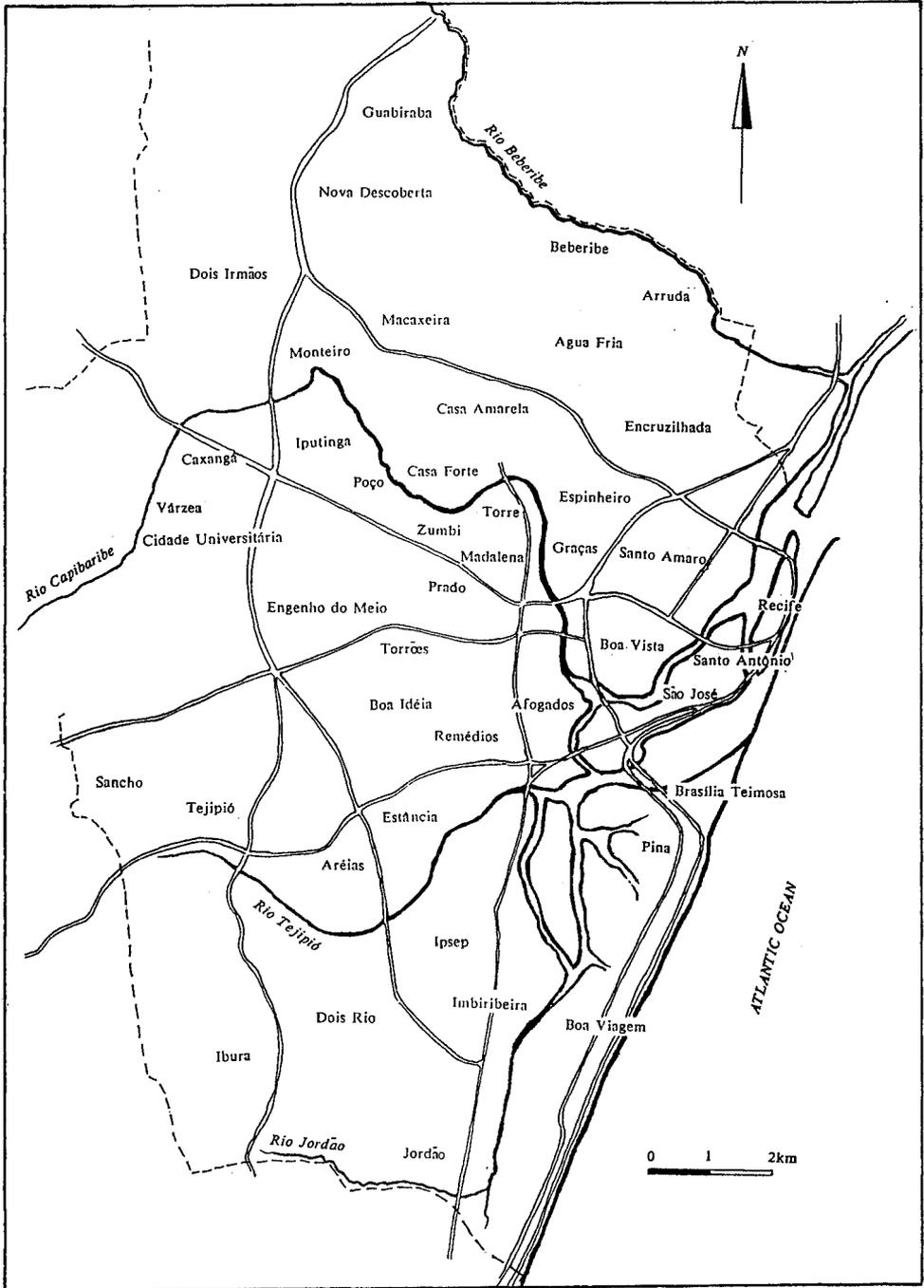
The analysis of the social construction of "urban social movements" as a specific form of neighborhood associativism and the dynamics of this process constitutes the three central chapters of this study, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 which cover the years from 1964 to 1988. In these chapters I take the municipal "level" as a vantage point for analysis. It provides the main territorial framework for the "supra-local" articulation of neighborhood associativism and it serves to highlight the municipal "level" of the local state and its policies. The 1964-1988 period has been sub-divided into three sub-periods according to different constellations of actors involved, against the background of shifts in the political conjuncture between 1964 and 1988.

Chapter 5 covers the period from the *coup* in 1964 to the *abertura democrática* in 1979, when a transition to government by civilians started to assume serious shape. The chapter starts with a discussion of the urban policies of the bureaucratic-authoritarian state and their specification at a municipal level. I subsequently discuss the re-emergence of neighborhood associativism after 1964 and the role of the Church. From the mid-1970s onward, the notion of "urban social movement" started to inform discussions on the practices of the Church. Assistentialist aspects were criticized and a new definition of "strategic interests" emerged from an analysis of "urban contradictions," indicating the issue of urban land use as of main importance. I shall show that this "reorientation" did not take place without friction with the existing discursive and organizational matrixes provided by the Church. These discussions accompanied and informed the development of two important movements in Recife, which will be discussed as culmination points of what can be referred to the formative period of "urban social movements" in Recife.

Chapter 6 covers the period from the beginning of the *abertura democrática* in 1979 to the first direct elections for a municipal executive in 1985. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss the change in urban policies in Recife after 1979, focussing on the regulation of urban land use and urbanization in the context of overall urban policy. These changes coincided with a new policy style as part of what I shall call the "politics of *abertura*." It was aimed at outflanking the emerging "urban social movements" and involved the sponsoring of parallel forms of neighborhood associativism through policies of "communitarian action." The second part of the chapter is devoted to efforts to articulate an "urban social movement" to resist the new policies. The rivalry over the hegemonization of neighborhood associativism produced a rapid rise in the number of local associations. The attempts to articulate these local associations into a broader "urban social movement" coincided with the "emancipation of the social movements" from the Church and the growing role of secular non-governmental organizations "at the service of the popular movement."

Chapter 7 is devoted to the experiments in institutional innovation that took place in Recife between 1985 and 1988. The opportunity for such experimentation arose with the direct election of a left-wing executive in late 1985. I shall discuss the development of proposals for the construction of new relations between the municipal executive and "the organized social movements of civil society" during the run-up to the 1985 elections, and the subsequent dynamics of policy implementation. This discussion will be oriented by the question as to whether this process of institutional experimentation was the fruit of innovative orientations of collective action or an internally generated adaptation of the system.

By way of a reconstruction of the social production of "new urban social movements" in Recife, I aim to highlight the contradictory features and the dilemmas which pervade the process and structure its dynamics. This, I hope, will provide insight into the role and impact of the "new urban social movements" during the period under discussion.



Recife Municipality: Some Neighborhoods