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The Challenge of Rural Democratisation: Perspectives from Latin America and the Philippines

EDITED BY

Jonathan Fox

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Special Issue on

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ROUTLEDGE

Editor's Introduction

by Jonathan Fox

The distribution of rural power in developing countries both shapes and is shaped by national politics. This volume addresses the question of why rural democratisation has proven to be so difficult across a wide range of national experiences. Transitions to elected civilian rule have recently been welcomed throughout the developing world, largely though not exclusively in Latin America. However, the relationship between such initial transitions and the longer-term consolidation of democratic systems of governance is far from clear. Elected civilian rulers have frequently failed to promote increased governmental accountability to the rural citizenry. While the implications are especially serious for countries with majority rural populations, authoritarian rural elites often retain significant political influence in predominantly urban developing countries, such as Brazil and Mexico.

Rural democratisation is an on-going process which develops, often unevenly, in the realms of both society and the state. Within civil society, it involves the emergence and consolidation of social and political institutions capable of representing rural interests *vis-à-vis* the state. Some may be specifically rural, such as peasant organisations, while others may be national associations, such as political parties, which develop a rural presence. For the state, rural democratisation requires effective majority rule as well as both formal and informal accountability to its rural citizens.

Rural democratisation cannot be separated from the challenge of democratising the state more generally. A focus on the rural political arena nevertheless raises a distinct set of analytical questions because the rural poor face particular internal and external obstacles when they attempt to hold the state accountable for its actions. In addition, the institutions usually thought to articulate and mediate the interests of civil society *vis-à-vis* the state, such as parties, trade unions, civic associations and the media, have a superficial or highly uneven rural presence in many developing countries.

This volume focuses on socio-political processes and institutions more than on specific rural development policies. Development analysts often

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conflate rural democratisation with equitable rural development policy, confusing process with outcome.[1] To understand why so few states are accountable to most of their rural citizens, we need a more systematic understanding of both the dynamics of rural collective action, and of how rural politics affect national politics and development policy. Some development theorists have begun to integrate rural politics into their explanations of economic policy-making. Bates [*1981*], for example, shows how the under-representation of food producer interests allows urban-based governments to offer low crop prices, leading in turn to low production.[2] Nevertheless, much of the rural–urban bias debate tends to extrapolate rural power relations from an analysis of the distribution of the benefits of state intervention in the economy.[3] To impute the balance of political power in the countryside from national economic policy outcomes neglects the dynamics of political factors which may well vary geographically, across policy areas or over time.[4]

The following articles explore both the limits and possibilities for rural democratisation in six diverse developing countries. This introductory chapter outlines the central analytical concerns which inform the volume and briefly describes the national case studies. It then examines three broad themes which emerge to varying degrees in all of the cases: the relationship between electoral and non-electoral politics; the concept of rural citizenship versus clientelism; and the articulation of direct and representative democracy.

RURAL COLLECTIVE ACTION AND NATIONAL POLITICAL CHANGE

While much of the literature on the transition to civilian rule emphasises, appropriately, the complex interaction between elite actors at key political turning points, analysis of the *consolidation* of democratic regimes requires the incorporation of a much broader array of political actors and processes. As O'Donnell [*1988: 283*] put it, 'if political democracy is to be consolidated, democratic practice needs to be spread throughout society, creating a rich fabric of democratic institutions and authorities'. This volume highlights one particularly intractable aspect of the broader problem of political practice and institution-building: the creation and sustenance of social and political institutions which effectively represent both the diverse and majority interests of rural people.

Our ability to grapple with this *problematique* is limited by the gap between most analyses of national and rural politics. The issue of democratisation has generated extensive literatures on both social movements and national politics; however, the convergence between levels of analysis, research questions and methodologies is often *ad hoc* at best. Analytical frameworks appropriate for national regimes devote little attention to the often more obdurate problem of 'subnational' democratic institution-building, and few approaches to national politics incorporate any systematic discussion of social movements.[5] The contemporary discussion of regime transition in Latin America, for example, tends to concentrate on political elites and national political institutions, focusing

secondarily on urban social movements and rarely at all on rural social movements.[6]

Conversely, the burgeoning literature on Latin American social movements gives little systematic consideration to their interaction with the state. For example, few approaches account for the ways in which openings from above create opportunities for mobilisation from below. Most tend to treat the state as a monolithic 'black box', rather than disaggregating it to see how different agencies and policy currents create both limits and possibilities for democratic change [*Fox, 1986; 1989b*]. As Grzybowski points out in his contribution, much of this literature focuses on the 'newness' of these movements, and the social processes within them, neglecting to assess their impact, if any, on the broader political and institutional system.[7]

The extensive literature on peasant politics is dominated by a rich and eloquent discussion of violent peasant rebellion and revolution. More recently, researchers have turned towards 'everyday forms of peasant resistance'. Yet the dichotomy in the theoretical literature between grand historical cataclysms and the daily texture of local power relations excludes a great deal of rural political activity, and in particular, the dynamics specific to the many intermediate social and political institutions which link rural and national politics.[8]

The articles which follow do not assume that peasant political behavior is inherently qualitatively different from that of other social groups.[9] The premise, rather, is that the obstacles faced by the rural poor are such that democratic collective action is often much more difficult in rural than in urban areas. These obstacles are of two types: those internal to rural social and political movements, and those which lie in the interaction between such movements and the state (both local and national).

First, collective action beyond the immediate village level is often constrained by factors largely *internal* to the process of articulating and defending interests: the difficulty of mass assembly, the relative dispersion of communities, the diversity of economic activities, the ecological context, and the daily precariousness of family survival, all of which heighten the many costs inherent in decisions to participate.[10] Collective action *beyond* the community level is both important and difficult, however, because the principal state and private sector forces which constrain opportunities for rural people frequently operate at the regional level. Regional elites often control the electoral machinery, the judicial system, the economic terms of trade, the allocation of credit, and last but certainly not least, the principal means of coercion.[11] Rural poor people have shown, however, that under certain circumstances they are willing and able to overcome these constraints, mobilising for democratic participation in the decisions which affect their lives.[12]

The second set of obstacles are primarily *external* to rural movements: establishing respect for basic political freedoms is often more difficult in rural than in urban areas. The forces behind public and private sector coercion are usually more entrenched in rural areas, leading to more intense repression of democratic activity, especially local institution-

building efforts. The usual absence of mass media facilitates the use of violence with impunity, and limits access to political information. External intervention also frequently takes the form of 'divide and conquer' strategies which combine selective material incentives with threats of coercion. This vulnerability of formal democratic institutions encourages much of rural political activity to remain less than public, and therefore often invisible to outside observers. The on-going threat of external aggression is especially noteworthy during the early stages of national transitions to elected civilian rule, when rural democrats' hopes are raised but they still very much need the active support of urban allies for the creation and defence of rural political space. In the course of such transitions, anti-democratic national political forces usually ally with rural autocrats. The result may even be a sharp *increase* in the use of violence against the rural poor, in spite of an urban-based political opening at the national level.[13]

CASE STUDIES FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE PHILIPPINES

This collection focuses on how democratic movements and institutions can emerge in national contexts which are often far from democratic. The authors apply institutional approaches to their analyses of the dynamics of political change, with an emphasis on key turning points within and across regimes. These studies deal with Mexican, Colombian, and Nicaraguan experiences of changes in rural political dynamics *within* regimes. The analyses of Brazil, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and the Philippines highlight continuity and change in rural politics *across* regime transitions.

Brazil

Much of the literature on Latin America's democratisation in the 1980s cast Brazil's return to civilian rule as a paradigmatic case of regime transition [*O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986*]. Analysts later recognized that many had underestimated the continuing influence of authoritarian power structures [*O'Donnell, 1988*]. Grzybowski analyses the relationship between rural workers' movements and national political change, showing how democratic political subjects emerged both within and outside of the official trade union structure, eventually becoming part of a national political alternative. While he stresses the importance of rural movements in transforming the political identities and practices of the workers themselves, Grzybowski also argues that the democratising potential of these movements is limited by their fragmentation, frequent defensive character, and inadequate links to national political institutions such as trade unions and political parties.

Colombia

Colombia's system of civilian political party rule often leads observers to characterise the regime as democratic [*Peeler, 1985*]. Nevertheless,

the regime failed to create political institutions which could effectively represent the majority of rural citizens. Zamosc analyses rural political dynamics from three distinct approaches: the growing consolidation of rural civil society; the contradictory relationships between peasants and political elites (as well as armed guerrilla counter-elites); and the drug mafia's growing challenge to the state's monopoly on the means of coercion. Representative rural citizens' organisations have increasingly attempted to hold the state accountable, while both government reformists and guerrilla organisations have attempted to increase their responsiveness to peasant concerns, but all are endangered by ongoing narco-military terrorism.

Mexico

Mexico's agrarian revolutionaries lost their war, official ideology notwithstanding. Peasants fought for land and liberty; what they got was land and the state [*Tutino, 1988: 8*]. Paré examines the history of rural corporatism in Mexico, focusing on how both the state and the organised peasantry have responded to the erosion of the agricultural economy and the regime's political legitimacy since the 1960s. She argues that the state has lost its traditional capacity to trade material concessions, albeit partial and selective, in exchange for political subordination. The more autonomous and participatory organisations that have emerged over the past two decades are both a cause and a consequence of the state's decreasing ability to control the peasant movement from above. Paré traces the roots of recent peasant demands for democracy and local political and economic autonomy, catalyzed by the hotly-contested 1988 presidential elections.

Bolivia

Rivera challenges many of the underlying assumptions in the democratisation literature, including many in this volume, in her analysis of the *ayllus* (indigenous communities) of northern Potosí. In the volume's only regional case study, Rivera focuses on an area where indigenous forms of social and democratic practice still survive, albeit threatened and marginalised by repeated attempts to impose individualistic or class-based Western conceptions of citizenship. Rivera argues that these political reforms have reproduced the authoritarian and paternalistic domination of the mestizo/creole urban elite over the indigenous rural majority. In her analysis, rural democratisation will require a radical reconceptualisation of citizenship, in accordance with Bolivia's multicultural reality.

Nicaragua

The Sandinistas were swept to power by a largely urban-based insurrection, but their victory created the first political opening in Nicaragua's

countryside. Ortega shows that while the rural poor quickly organised and gained official representation within the evolving political system, agrarian policy still gave priority to the state and large private farms until the mid-1980s. His analysis shows how different forms of political pressure, both inside and outside the state, combined to push for a pro-peasant shift in agrarian policy. Ortega integrates the role of local pressures from empowered poor peasants, many of them war veterans, with a focus on the changing balance of forces within the state, stressing the army's push for a more pro-peasant agrarian policy.

Philippines

The rural Philippines has a great deal in common with Latin America. Centuries of Spanish rule, followed by US conquest and tutelage, left the Philippines with perhaps the most polarised land distribution in Asia. The colonial and neocolonial concentration of large landholdings was the foundation for what Anderson [*1988*] terms 'cacique democracy'. More recently, the Philippines has experienced a pattern of populist and clientelist party competition, dictatorship, and return to civilian rule that is quite reminiscent of Latin American experiences.[14] Lara and Morales' historical analysis of the Philippine peasant movement highlights the repeated efforts by the rural poor to gain some degree of political power, as well as the entrenched structural and institutional obstacles to rural political pluralism. They characterise the post-Marcos period as a 'blocked transition' to political democracy, and examine how peasants have responded to the changing array of political opportunities and constraints with new approaches to coalition-building, organisational forms, and economic initiatives.

COMMON THEMES AND QUESTIONS

In exploring the relationship between national political institutions and rural citizens' effective access to democratic rights in Latin America and the Philippines, the articles in this volume address three distinct but overlapping themes: the relationship between electoral and non-electoral politics; the contested nature of citizenship; and the complex interaction between representative and direct democracy.

Electoral and Non-Electoral Participation in the Countryside

The relationship between social movements, electoral politics, and democratisation is central to almost all of the articles in the volume. The consolidation of fully open, competitive electoral systems is constrained by the inability of many civilian regimes to extend effective democratic rights to the majority of their rural citizens. In Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and the Philippines, mass-based democratic social organisations have repeatedly attempted to participate in electoral politics despite limited political space. In all of these countries, coercion by local elites, often

backed by state security forces, is an important factor in local electoral politics, and national civilian governments have rarely intervened forcefully to defend the rural democratic process.[15] As a result, threats of violence and retribution add to the resilience and 'competitive edge' of elite electoral machines.

National electoral politics are also affected by the entrenched power of rural elites. Brazil's civilian New Republic, for example, gives vastly disproportionate representation to rural states in the federal legislature. The lack of effective majority rule in much of the Brazilian countryside leads to electoral outcomes that give rural elites significant national as well as regional clout [*Grzybowski, this volume*]. In Mexico's highly contested 1988 presidential election, the official results showed a very strong correlation between opposition support and the degree of urbanisation [*López et al., 1989: 33*]. However, this was more an indicator of access to basic political freedoms and information than of political preferences. The official majority depended on a crucial fraudulent margin from the numerous rural districts which lacked sufficient freedom of assembly, organisation and information to permit independent scrutiny of the electoral process [*Paré, this volume*].[16]

Historically, the political exclusion of rural opposition movements by deeply flawed electoral systems has often led peasant movements to emphasise mass direct action and/or armed struggle as the principal route to change. Repression and fraud tend to polarise debates over political strategy into an electoral versus non-electoral dichotomy. None the less, in recent years, various rural opposition movements have developed political strategies that combine electoral participation, direct action and lobbying, along with economic, military, ethnic/nationalist and gender-based approaches. Peasant and rural worker organisations pursue multi-arena strategies in almost all of the countries dealt with here, combining efforts to build representative and autonomous economic interest groups with campaigns to build local bases of electoral support for allied political parties.

Participation in flawed electoral processes poses multiple challenges for rural democratic movements. In countries where vote-buying has long been widespread in rural areas, decades of fraudulent and ritualistic voting patterns are slowly and unevenly giving way, where alternatives appear increasingly viable, to more active and autonomous participation. Grzybowski, Lara and Morales, Paré, and Zamosc each argue this case in their contributions. But as Paré notes, more democratic social movements are not immune from the dominant political culture, and electoral pressures may create and exacerbate conflicts between party-linked and independent grassroots organisations. Lara and Morales note the Philippine opposition's attempts to weaken the traditionally clientelistic political culture through electoral campaigns that emphasised 'issue-oriented' politics and grassroots education. In general, however, violence and bribery, as well as enduring patterns of clientelism and limited access to information, limit the extent to which mass-based social and economic protests translate into party identifications and issue-based

voting behaviour, much to the frustration of party organisers trying to build on successful social mobilisation.

Nominally pluralist electoral systems do not necessarily guarantee effective rural access to political rights. Fully free and fair electoral systems lead, by definition, to uncertain outcomes [*Przeworski, 1985*]. Even in open systems, the rural poor may not necessarily be able to offer their own political alternative, but their numbers offer an incentive to urban political parties to favour land reform [*Lehmann, 1974*]. Entrenched elites therefore correctly perceive genuine rural political competition as a threat to highly unequal land tenure systems. Pluralist electoral systems combined with highly polarised social structures, as in Brazil, Colombia and the Philippines, therefore turn out to be among the most violent. In contrast, a history of land reform gives Bolivia's competitive electoral system a much less polarised social foundation.[17]

Toward Rural Citizenship

The process of rural democratisation involves a transition from clientelism to shared ideas of citizenship as the dominant principle regulating access to public services. Citizenship entails a set of non-contingent, generalised political rights, while clientelism refers to the inherently selective and contingent distribution of resources and power based on ties of personal and political loyalty [*Schmidt, et al., 1977*]. For the rural poor, such a transition involves transcending the status of 'followers', in which they are subordinated to their ostensible allies and vulnerable to external manipulation. Effective citizenship requires the capacity to participate autonomously in politics, and to take propositional action which actually shapes state decisions and enforces state accountability. The issue of clientelism versus citizenship often hinges on the balance of power within alliances between grassroots social movements, urban-based intellectuals and workers, and national political parties. The history of most such alliances, whether electoral or revolutionary, indicates that the rural poor should not expect their interests to be consistently represented by national elites.[18] Few governments treat the basic material needs of the rural poor as fundamental citizenship rights.[19] Even agrarian revolutionary legacies do not guarantee effective state commitments to the rural poor. In both Mexico and Nicaragua, for example, post-revolutionary state-building for years took priority over rural redistribution, until pressure from both below and within the ruling parties eventually led to the extensive implementation of pro-peasant agrarian reforms [*Paré; Ortega, this volume*].

The promotion of the self-organisation of the rural poor by religious activists and non-governmental development organisations had political consequences of national importance in many developing countries, notably Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and the Philippines. The emphasis of these organisations on changing political attitudes and values is crucial to any democratic project.[20] It should be noted, however, that the democratising impact of religious and development organisations is more often assumed than demonstrated. Rivera [*this volume*] argues that 'progressive' NGOs have imposed Western concepts of citizenship and participation on Bolivia's *ayllus*, undermined indigenous forms of political organisation and democratic practice, and consequently reproduced paternalistic and authoritarian patterns of domination. Conventional liberal, populist and socialist conceptions of political and economic rights tend to exclude women and indigenous communities, underestimating the importance and resilience of the ideas and structures which oppress them.[21] Large numbers of rural people will continue to be excluded from citizenship rights until gender and ethnicity-based forms of domination, internalised as well as externally imposed, are challenged more consistently.

Distinguishing between clientelism and citizenship is perhaps most difficult in cases where the state plays a dominant role in structuring the system of interest representation. This is most often the case in single or dominant party systems, but even states with pluralist party systems play highly interventionist roles in rural politics, attempting to structure the weave of the rural social fabric by regulating property rights, channeling investment and subsidy flows, and defining a narrow range of legitimate channels for participation. Social science still has difficulty measuring *degrees* of representation in 'official' interest groups. In this kind of institutional environment, the transition from clientelism to citizenship may begin when the rural poor manage to carve out their own autonomous spaces, as they have within some otherwise state-controlled, 'transmission belt' type organisations. The articles on Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Nicaragua deal with this phenomenon. The creation of 'grey areas' of semi-representative political space within official organisations is quite common but little understood.[22] Such organisations are often treated as 'black boxes', with little attention to shifts in the balance of power which may turn them from organs of control into more representative institutions.

The subjective character of citizenship raises the question of how rights are defined through political conflict. For citizenship rights to be effective, however they are defined, they must be generalised and guaranteed. This volume begins to explore the question of how and under what conditions the rural poor gain access to universal rights, rather than politically conditioned social and economic 'rewards'.

The [Dis]articulation of Representative and Direct Democracy

It is difficult to transcend the conventional dichotomy between electoral and non-electoral political participation, or to deepen our understanding of citizenship, without addressing the question of the relationship between representative and direct democracy. The two forms are potentially complementary and mutually reinforcing. Representative forms are often seen as more appropriate for political institutions, and direct democracy more viable for social entities [*Bobbio, 1987: 43–62*].[23] Most of the volume's contributors conclude that the broadening and

deepening of democratic social organisations may be essential for furthering political democracy in political systems which are not fully free and fair. Conversely, the consolidation of participatory democracy on any scale is certainly difficult in the absence of representative processes of governance that defend basic political freedoms.

In the countryside in most developing countries, the limits and fragility of the electoral process mean that representative, accountable political parties would be necessary but not sufficient to further the functioning of representative democracy. In polarised environments, a dense web of other associative civic institutions is also needed to defend the representative political process and to hold development bureaucrats accountable. The contribution of rural civil society to democratisation depends on civic associations which include democratic interest groups, self-help organisations, religious congregations, ethnic associations, and community-oriented economic enterprises. This theme appears in all the contributions to this volume.

The nature of the institutions most critical to rural democratisation depends on, among other factors, the identity and 'location' of the principal anti-democratic forces. In much of rural Latin America, for example, regional elites, embedded in both the state and the private sector, constitute the major obstacle [*Fox, 1986*].[24] As a result, regional organisations are often likely to be the most effective counterweights to elite domination, potentially increasing peasant bargaining power while retaining autonomy and accountable leadership [*Huizer, 1985: 198–9*]. Either local or national peasant groups could arguably do the same, but local groups are easily isolated by their enemies, while national organisations are usually democratic only in so far as they are made up of representative regional building-blocks.

The contributors to this volume focus much more on the problems of limited representative democracy than on the challenge of democratising the organisations of rural civil society. More generally, analysts of social movements often fail to document their frequent assertions that the organisations they describe are indeed democratic. Representative democratic processes are not limited to the state; they are critical to the democratisation of large membership organisations as well. Regional peasant organisations may have the greatest potential to link direct and representative forms of democracy.[25] In this context, a regional organisation can be defined as one that brings together too many communities to be run by direct democracy alone; face-to-face forms of accountability and decision-making are therefore insufficient, requiring some degree of delegation of authority. Even if formal electoral processes work, however, internal democracy remains quite vulnerable because the leadership is often the only link among the many dispersed and diverse member communities. Horizontal linkages *among* member communities are therefore crucial for offsetting the concentration of power in the regional leadership [*Fox and Hernández, 1989*].[26]

The national and local levels of analysis can be linked by mapping the rural political arena in terms of the uneven presence of relatively demo-

cratic counterweights. Analysts across the political spectrum agree that democracy depends on a plurality of independent social and political organisations, empowering citizens *vis-à-vis* the state and decentralising bargaining power among a range of social forces. The healthy sustenance of these building blocks depends in turn on their own internal power relations. Such organisations are most likely to be kept 'on track' by mutually reinforcing combinations of representative and direct democratic processes, keeping counterweights democratic with their own internal counterweights.

CONCLUSIONS

To what degree does the long-term consolidation of stable democratic rule in developing countries, particularly in Latin America, depend on overcoming the obstacles specific to the democratisation of the countryside?[27] The answer varies widely across cases and depends on assumptions about the foundations and nature of democracy itself. These concluding remarks focus on some of the many challenges which remain.

Rural democratisation in developing countries is likely to be driven primarily by a shift in the balance of forces within society, but since states regulate rights, such a process must also be expressed in the distribution of power *vis-à-vis* the state. States may well be occasionally responsive to rural protest movements, which may use a broad repertoire of actions to resist or veto state actions, but official responsiveness does not necessarily imply democratisation.[28] For example, a state may respond to the protests of those displaced by a dam project with some form of compensation. If the movements gain sufficient strength, perhaps the state might respond by slowing or even suspending the project. But democratisation implies that citizens have the right, as well as the power, to participate in the policy process. In a democracy, those to be displaced could potentially intervene beforehand in the debate over *whether* they should be displaced, as well as over who should benefit from water and energy policy more generally. Are these differences of degree or kind, and how do we develop better indicators for understanding such distinctions?

Shifts toward effective majority rule in developing countries are likely to be highly uneven, varying widely across regions and policy arenas. How do we 'unpack' states and rural societies, to begin to capture the diversity of their interactions? Rural civil societies in even the smaller countries under study here vary widely in their degrees of 'density', their social and institutional 'thickness', and are often riven with cross-cutting cleavages. No single type of social organisation or political structure is likely to be able to represent the diversity of interests and identities among the rural poor.

Our capacity for generalisation and cross-national comparison remains extremely limited. We still lack adequate analytical tools for understanding changing 'degrees' of democratisation in both state and society. It remains useful, however, to understand the process of rural democratisation in the most general sense as an institutionalised shift in the balance of

power, through a wide range of possible forms, towards effective majority rule combined with respect for minority and individual rights. This approach highlights many of the reasons why the transition to multi-party civilian rule does not necessarily lead to the consolidation of demoratic governance, particularly for rural citizens. This volume suggests that the consolidation of democracy in developing countries depends on the rural poor's capacity to gain both power and legitimacy in national politics.

NOTES

1. For example, about 65 per cent of the population of the Philippines is rural, and 70 per cent of the rural population is landless. Is the government of the Philippines undemocratic because it has not carried out land reform, or has it failed to carry out land reform because it is undemocratic?
2. Lipton [*1977*] set many of the terms of debate over rural versus urban bias in the development process, followed up by the thoughtful discussions in Harriss and Moore [*1984*]. See Kitching [*1982*] and Moore [*1984a*] for historical overviews of the debate. Potter and Unwin [*1989*] offer geographers' perspectives.
3. For exceptional African discussions, in addition to Bates [*1981*], see also Bratton [*1987*] and Mikell [*1989*]. Huizer's [*1985*] synthesis of the Latin American experience and Nolan and White's [*1984*] analysis of China's ambiguous record are also relevant. Key related works on South Asia include Herring [*1983*]; Kohli [*1986*] and Moore [*1985*]. Much of the discussion about the nature and causes of inequality, however, both within the countryside and in relation to the urban sector, assumes rather than analyses the dynamics of rural politics. See also Lipton [*1989*] for a recent exploration.
4. While the most important power imbalances often prevent key political issues from ever reaching the agenda and becoming points of overt contention [*Lukes, 1974*; *Moore, 1984b*], the study of observable conflict over state intervention in the country-side nevertheless can contribute significantly to our understanding of the determinants of state action.
5. The best studies of agrarian reform come closest to synthesising rural, regional and national politics. For useful references from the Latin American experience, see, among others, Cleaves and Scurrah [*1980*]; de Janvry [*1981*]; Lehmann [*1974*]; Petras and LaPorte [*1971*]; Rivera [*1987*]; Sanderson [*1981*] and Zamosc [*1986*]. See also note 3.
6. See, for example, Diamond, Linz and Lipset [*1989*]; O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead [*1986*]; Baloyra [*1987*]; Drake and Silva [*1986*]; Malloy and Seligson [*1987*]; Peeler [*1985*]; and Stepan [*1989*]. Calderón and dos Santos [*1987*] is a partial exception.
7. Boschi [*1984*] offers one of the most incisive English-language formulations of the analytical problem of the role of social movements and national democratic transitions. The Brazilian discussion is perhaps the most sophisticated in Latin America [*Reis and O'Donnell, 1988*]. In addition, see Eckstein [*1989*] for an important collection on Latin American social movements in English. Slater [*1985*] is also relevant. Gledhill [*1988*] offers one of the most thoughtful discussions of Latin American agrarian movements in relation to the European discussion of 'new social movements'.
8. Barrington Moore [*1967*] made the provocative and still-controversial argument that rural class actors often played determinative roles in shaping national development, even for today's industrial societies. The research which follows in this tradition, however, tends to focus either on the role of agrarian politics in specifically European contexts [*Stephens, 1987*], or on the role of peasants in revolutionary (and therefore exceptional) transitions in developing countries. Wolf [*1969*] and Walton [*1984*] are among the few to integrate multiple levels of analysis. Other theoretically significant works include: Popkin [*1979*]; Paige [*1975*]; Skocpol [*1979, 1982*]; Scott [*1976*]; Weller and Guggenheim [*1982*]; and Tilly [*1974*]. The key works in the wave of research on 'everyday forms of resistance,' which has yet to 'take off' in Latin American studies, are

Scott, [*1986*]; Scott and Kerkvliet [*1986*] and Colburn [*1990*]. Hart [*1990*] goes further, building in both state and gender.

9. Such approaches include, for example, well-known ideas about 'resistance to change', 'the limited good', predispositions to millenarianism, charismatic or authoritarian leadership, and inherently individualistic 'petty-bourgeois' aspirations for landowner-ship. Cultural and institutional contexts shape the political behaviour of peasants as they do of all social groups. One can speak, for example, of political values that are unique to indigenous peasants, where traditional communitarian governance structures have survived [*Rivera; Paré; this volume*].
10. Note that this discussion does not address the more strictly anthropological issues of collective action *within* rural communities, where kinship and face-to-face power relations play much more important roles. The premise here is that political partici-pation *within* individual villages is necessary but far from sufficient to affect power relations *vis-à-vis* the state. For relevant discussions of rural collective action problems, in addition to references on peasant revolution cited above, see: Attwood and Baviskar [*1987*]; Cumings [*1981*]; Landsberger and Hewitt [*1970*]; Huizer [*1985*]; Olson [*1986*]; Tendler [*1983*]; Tilly [*1974; 1978*]; and Wade [*1988*]. Ironically, Olson's neoclassical discussion of the collective action problems of smallholders converges with Marx's well-known observation that their mode of production combined with poor means of communication and poverty, 'isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse .... In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no unity, no national union and no political organisation, they ... cannot represent themselves' [from 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in Shanin, [*1987: 332*].
11. While the traditional operation of local power structures is well understood, their extraordinary capacity to change and adapt to 'modernization' has received less attention. There is a significant literature on local/regional 'bossism,' but it is rarely integrated into the study of contemporary national politics. Migdal [*1988*] is an important exception, framing the issue in terms of 'state weakness'. For works which integrate levels of analysis in Latin American cases, see, among others, Bartra [*1975*]; Fox [*1986; 1989b*]; Fox and Gordillo [*1989*]; Fox and Hernández [*1989*]; Gordillo [*1979; 1988*]; Kern [*1973*]; Huizer [*1985*]; Roniger [*1987*].
12. A classic article by Shanin [*1987*] offers a concise typology of peasant political action: 'autonomous class action', externally 'guided political action', and 'amorphous political action' (either violent or passive).
13. In the cases of civilian governments analysed in this volume, this challenge is especially pronounced in Colombia, Brazil, and the Philippines, where the use of coercion against the rural poor and their allies has increased since the early 1980s. [*Amnesty International, 1988a; 1988b; 1988c; Zamosc; Grzybowski; Lara and Morales; this volume*]. State-sanctioned rural political violence is also a serious problem in Mexico, although measuring increases in incidence (as distinct from reporting) in the course of the evolution of the regime is difficult [*Amnesty International, 1986; Fox, 1986; Paré, this volume*]. In Nicaragua, the principal source of political violence against the rural poor is the US-backed counter-revolutionary army [*Americas Watch, 1986 (and other annual reports); Ortega, this volume*].
14. We still lack a systematic comparison of rural power relations in the Philippines and Latin America. Cumings' [*1989*] analysis of South Korea is the most sophisticated Asian political comparison with Latin America. Most cross-regional comparative research has focused on industrial policy.
15. In the Philippines, the peasant-based guerrilla army reportedly intervened in several areas to defend ballot boxes against landlord/army violence, facilitating the election of at least two of the most pro-land reform congressional legislators in 1987 [*field interviews, 1987*]. It should be noted that this coordination between reform and revolutionary forces was unusual, since most of the guerrilla forces ignored the elections. In contrast, government armed forces played the opposite role in the 1984 Nicaraguan elections, defending rural voters from counter-revolutionary terrorist attacks.
16. While coercion was clearly a factor in some areas, official control over the mass media

was probably most important, particularly television and radio. The viability of the electoral opposition was so new and unforseen that blocking access to this information was an important factor in many rural citizens' political decisions (that is, whether and how to mobilise, to vote or to contest fraud). One must also acknowledge the very limited capacity of Mexican opposition parties to reach rural citizens, part of a more general gap between the development of civil society and the lagging party system [*Fox, 1989a; Paré, this volume*].

17. Although the Bolivian state is responsible for perhaps the least state coercion of any of the cases examined here, it still manages to deny effective political rights to significant numbers of indigenous people through cultural domination [*Rivera, this volume*].
18. For partial answers to the question of 'who gets what' in such alliances, see de Janvry's [*1981*] overview of the Latin American land reform experience and Deere's [*1984*] detailed comparison of socialist land reforms. Kohli's [*1986*] analysis of the electoral and institutional constraints on elected leftist state governments in India is instructive, as is Herring and Edwards'[*1983*] analysis of the conditions underlying an exceptional Indian state employment programme for the landless. For an analysis of the classic Leninist conception of such alliances, see Kingston-Mann [*1985*]. One of the best treatments of alliances between poor and middle peasants with urban-based revolutionaries is Wolf [*1969*].
19. The broadest, most universal access to certain key citizens' rights in Latin America is the case of the comprehensive social welfare rights extended to the Cuban rural population [*Stubbs, 1989a; 1989b*]. Cuban peasants can actually retire with adequate pensions, for example. The Cuban experience is based on high degrees of socialisation of property, political consensus, and foreign economic support that are unlikely to be reproduced, however. Orthodox socialist assumptions about necessary trade-offs between political and socio-economic rights are now widely questioned in Latin America.
20. It remains an open question whether rural poor people 'learn' that they have rights through the *concientización* approach [*Fals Borda, 1985*], or whether institutionally-based outsiders simply reduce perceived risks and create relatively free spaces that did not exist before.
21. Rural women, for example, have been systematically excluded from access to land under most Latin American agrarian reforms, not to mention the right to autonomous political participation [*Deere and León, 1987*].
22. See also Fox and Gordillo [*1989*] on Mexico, and Purnell [*1990*] on Peru. The internal dynamics of rural mass organisations in communist regimes are much less well-understood. On China, see Nolan and White [*1984*], and Zweig [*1989*], among others. Stubbs [*1989b*] offers an instructive analysis of Cuban rural politics.
23. Bobbio suggests that 'democratic progress' can be measured not 'by the number of people who have the right to vote, but the number of contexts outside politics where the right to vote is exercised' [*1987: 56*]. His argument weakens when he assumes that democracy necessarily proceeds from the political to the social sphere, rather than in a more interaction process [*1987: 54*].
24. In El Salvador and Guatemala, in contrast, the national armed forces are clearly the principal obstacle.
25. This must be highly qualified where there are deep cultural cleavages between regional and local leaders, as Rivera [*this volume*] points out in her analysis of the interaction between indigenous community governance structures and mestizo-dominated regional and national peasant unions in Bolivia.
26. More generally, an organisation's structure and goals condition the extent to which it will effectively represent the interests of the rural poor. See Attwood and Baviskar [*1987*]; Hirschman [*1984*]; Leonard and Marshall [*1982*]; and Tendler [*1983*] for important contributions to the institutional political economy of rural membership organisations. Tendler's analysis of socio-economic 'spillover effects' and public goods is especially useful, showing how not-very-democratic leaders can act in broadly representative ways. One could frame many of the issues raised in this essay in terms of 'institutional spillover effects', to the degree that the increased accountability of state and social organisations to the rural poor can be considered a public good. When citizenship makes inroads against clientelism, it becomes difficult to limit access to the benefits of accountability.
27. Stable *democratic* rule must be distinguished from political stability more generally. Political stability and democratisation are not necessarily compatible, at least in the short run. If 'more democracy' in a polarised countryside means that the state becomes more accountable to the rural poor than to entrenched elites, then conflict is certainly likely. Yet such an alliance between the state and the rural poor can lay the foundation for political stability (although not necessarily accountability) in the long term, as in the classic case of Mexico's dramatic land reform of the 1930s [*Paré, this volume*]. Some analysts see rural political stability in developing countries as requiring a minimally equitable distribution of land, but minimise the importance of autonomous, representative organisations of the rural poor or the rupture of the state's alliance with rural elites for the prospects of actually carrying out such reforms effectively [*Huntington, 1968; Prosterman and Reidinger, 1987*].
28. Jeffrey Rubin's comments highlighted this distinction [*Page and Purnell, 1989*].

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Rural Workers' Movements and Democratisation in Brazil

*by Cândido Grzybowski**

This article analyses how rural workers constitute themselves as collective political subjects through their participation in social movements. Their role in Brazil's ongoing political transition is evaluated in the context of the authoritarian rural power structures still entrenched in the political system. Rural social movements contribute to democratisation in two respects: as counterweights to authoritarian agrarian elites and the state at the local and regional levels, and as vehicles for transforming and strengthening the political identities of rural workers themselves. Their political capacity is currently limited, however, by their lack of strong ties to intermediate institutions such as unions and political parties.

> The movement developed, arose out of its own necessity. Maybe we were learning through practice, in day to day life. We have stumbled a lot in this struggle, and we go on learning. Many times people are obliged to do extra work and have to learn to struggle within their own circumstances, from the very situation in which they live. We had to be creative. What's interesting is that this was something created out of our own heads, all of us together. We discovered that this struggle was an alternative, the only alternative that we had in order to resist.
>
> Chico Mendes[1]
> Leader of the Rubber Tappers' Movement
> assassinated 22 December 1988

INTRODUCTION

This article analyses the relationship between rural workers'[2] movements, entrenched authoritarian power structures, and the political transition in Brazil. While Brazilian rural movements are extremely diverse, the focus here is on their common features and dynamics, and particularly on the new forms of participation and organisation employed by rural workers to

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