

GLOBALISATION AND MOBILISATION: IN RESPONSE TO SUSAN ECKSTEIN

Henry Veltmeyer (Zacatecas, May 14, 2004)

Introduction

Eckstein's paper provides, if not particularly useful analytical tools, a good opportunity for exploring the dynamics associated with two decades of 'economic restructuring under the 'new economic model' (neoliberalism) and the strategic and political responses to these 'transformative changes' made in the form of what many have viewed—and some continue to view—as 'new social movements'. The paper, it has to be said, is riddled with conceptual imprecision and some empirical flaws but these derive from what appears to be relatively hurried writing with little time to review her brief descriptive accounts to illustrate or support points of interpretation. No doubt the paper like this one was prepared to elicit critical feedback on points of information and interpretation. The criticisms made below should be so understood, taken in the spirit of advancing the debate opened up by Eckstein.

Eckstein's paper addresses the fundamental issue of understanding the social movements generated by two decades of policy reform designed to bring about a new world order, an order in which, to cite George W. Bush in his 2002 National Security Report, 'the forces of freedom, democracy and free enterprise' have been freed from the constraints of governmental—a neoliberal world of free market capitalism on a global scale. Because the object of Eckstein's analysis—the forces of resistance against this brave new world can only be understood in the context of the neoliberal policy reforms implemented over the two decades since 1965, her paper is logically enough organized in two parts: first, a brief (overly brief, I would say, in terms of trying to explain, that is, place forms of resistance in their historical and institutional context) account of the economic restructuring process over the period under study—1985 to date (although the paper seems to go no further than the 1990s). Second, an interpretation of the political dynamics of resistance to this process, with particular attention to 'overt coordinated forms of resistance' to neoliberalism, that is, the social movements.

Before addressing the questions raised by Eckstein's paper let me first briefly discuss the schools of thought identified in the introduction to the paper. These schools not only provide alternative theoretical perspectives on the dynamics at issue but also constitute alternative frames of analysis—lens through which the world is viewed in different ways. Each analytic or frame serves to identify certain issues and expose certain aspects of a complex reality, keeping others from view—and thus, as is the function of theory generally, to simplify reality, making analysis possible albeit (necessarily) in a limited way. Although she inexplicably does not discuss them at any level, Eckstein identifies five alternative theoretical approaches or schools of thought.

First, she identifies an approach rooted in advocacy or ideology of neoliberalism and thus supportive of a neoliberal path to, and pattern of, developments—viewing developments such as 'globalization' and capitalist development in neoliberal form, not only as desirable but both necessary and inevitable. This approach is viewed by Eckstein as on one extreme of a theoretical spectrum, the other extreme of which is represented by a postmodernist focus on particularity, situational contexts and the vantage point of the particular 'subject' which is to

view reality not in structural comparative terms but in its local and situational context. It is unfortunate that Eckstein not only does not confront her own approach with these alternative interpretations but neither the neoliberal nor the ‘postmodern/poststructuralist approach is discussed—not even ‘identified’ (referenced as to source and exemplar); both are highly stylized and overly simplified.

In addition to these two polar approaches, the one focusing on the global, the other the local, Eckstein turns to the mainstream of sociological thought on social movements and development to identify two approaches that occupied a central position in the 1980s debates: Marxism, which dominated the sociological analysis of social movements in Latin America until the mid 1980s and the so-called ‘theoretical impasse’/post-structuralist critique (see, for example, Brass, 2000; and Veltmeyer, 1997); and a state-centred approach that, obviously enough, focused political analysis on the state rather than class or social relations of production. Actually, in regard to a historically contextualized form of sociological analysis of social movements—what Eckstein seeks to provide—to counterpose a class and a state-centric form of analysis is not particularly useful. In the Latin American context social movements have never been analysed in this way, on the basis of two distinct approaches, one with a central focus on class, the other on the state. A class analysis of these movements has always centred on the relation of social movements to both the state and the underlying class structure and accompanying class struggle. In the specific context of Latin America under the neoliberal model (the 1980s and 1990s) both social movements and the state are central to the class struggle and it is difficult to say which is more ‘central’—class or the state (on this see Petras and Veltmeyer, 2002, 2003d).

Each of the approaches that the paper refers to (but does not discuss or bring into analytic focus) constructs its object from a different theoretical standpoint, providing alternative interpretations of the dynamics of change and development associated with the globalization of neoliberal capitalism. However, Eckstein eschews each of these approaches, presenting instead—in very abbreviated and elliptical form—her own preferred ‘contextualized institutional perspective’, one that presumably (and apparent from her subsequent analysis) draws attention to the historically rooted institutional context for the actions taken and strategies pursued by the social movements that emerged in the 1980s to dominate Latin America’s political landscape in the 1990s.

Since the introduction to the paper provides only a few enigmatic words and abstracted reference to this ‘analytic frame’ and alternatives all that we can do in our review of the paper is determine how and where her account (facts/description) and her interpretation (ideas/analysis) are shaped by her lens and frame—to detect the presence of her approach in the relative absence of, or de-emphasis on, points of interpretation salient in alternative forms of analysis.

Global restructuring—the dynamics of globalization

The problem with the paper’s outline of the neoliberal restructuring process, aside perhaps from its excessive brevity (barely a page), is that provides an inadequate conceptualization of the dynamics involved.

First, the relevant ideas are not laid out well; it is not even clear to what extent her ‘perspective’ (historical contextualization) defines a theoretical or methodological approach to

analysis; the only presented ‘idea’ that might be used to interpret the ‘facts’ (although Nietzsche in postmodernist fashion argued that ‘there are no facts, only interpretations’) relates to the categorization of neoliberal policies into three types, viz. (i) the ‘reduction of trade and foreign investment restrictions’; (ii) ‘privatizations and public sector retrenchment’; and (iii) ‘price liberalizations and movements to minimise consumption. These categories are used to organize her account of diverse social movements in the region, sort out and identify them, and ‘analyse’ their dynamics in terms of the idea that each form of policy reform has induced, or is associated with, a specific type of social movement. As we argue below there are problems with this conception.

Second. For various reasons the paper makes no reference whatsoever to the ideological and political dynamics of globalization as a ‘project’, that is, as a strategy consciously designed to serve a particular set of geo-political or economic ‘interests’ and responsive to a partly hidden agenda (on this see the 2000 edition of *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2000). In fact, neoliberal globalization should be viewed both as ideology, a class project based on a conscious calculation of means to an end), and as a process, the dynamics of which can be understood in terms of the objective and subjective conditions generated by the project. The fact is that the paper does not really allow us to properly understand the dynamics of either the process or the project involved, i.e. to identify the relevant structural and strategic variables in its specific situational or general structural or systemic (and thus comparable) context. Given the stated objective of the paper this is a problem.

As for the ‘neoliberal’ or ‘global restructuring’ process by which Eckstein denotes the transformative changes) ‘macro political, social and cultural, along with economic’) wrought by a neoliberal approach towards development in the region, it can, and should be traced back to the counteroffensive launched by capital against labour in the early to mid 1970s both in Europe (see, for example, Davis 1984; and Crouch and Pizzorno, 1978) and Latin America—Allende’s Chile to be precise. This counteroffensive was one of a number of strategic or structural ‘responses’ to the systemic crisis of the early 1970s, a crisis that put an end to the ‘Golden Age of Capitalism’ (Marglin and Schor, 1990; Veltmeyer and Petras, 1997, 2000). The Latin American historical context for these developments—a protracted class war—is particularly relevant and important, with specific reference to the first round of ‘sweeping economic reforms’ and neoliberal experiments in Chile under Pinochet (as well as Argentina, Uruguay and elsewhere). In this context, for example, it is possible to view the Pinochet regime as a pioneer of neoliberalism, originator of the ‘bold’ and ‘sweeping’ economic reforms that economists at the World Bank would use to construct the ‘new economic model’.

Understanding neoliberalism in this way, in ideological terms, as part of a neoconservative counterrevolution (in regards to the reformist project of international development that preceded globalization see Toye, 1997) could have led Eckstein to a different analysis of the forces involved. The point is that neither neoliberalism as an ideology (i.e., as a project) or as a process—and thus the dynamics of resistance—are contextualized properly.

Third. The paper makes reference to the ‘historically rooted institutionalization’ but ‘institutions’, as Eckstein knows all too well (she has analysed the dynamics of this process in a previous study on Latin American social movements) are no more than stable or patterned responses and practices of a particular social group or class, and these ‘practices’ have both objectively determined (economic structural) and subjectively defined (political) conditions.

The ‘dynamics of development’ and their effects (such as ‘homogenization’) are not merely the result of the workings of a ‘system’ but of consciously taken and organized ‘actions’, a fact requiring us to clearly conceptualise the subject of the action—the ‘social actor(s)’ in some accounts, or ‘class(es)’ in another. In the case of neoliberal capitalism or the globalization project Leslie Sklair (1997, 2000) and others (Robinson & Harris 2000) write of a ‘transnational capitalist class’ in formation in the early 1980s, and operating through a variety of economic and social institutions, notably TNCs, the IMF and the World Bank—and, with oblique reference to another strategic project which is also unaccountably (and totally) absent in Eckstein’s ‘analysis’ – ‘imperialism’. The significance of this ‘absence’ is that ‘US imperialism’ is a critical feature in the ideology of the critically important anti-systemic social movements that emerged in the 1990s and to which the paper does indeed make reference. The institutions of this ‘project’ (imperialism) include not only the TNCs, but ‘Washington and Wall Street, as well as the World bank and the IMF, which can be viewed institutionally as adjuncts of the US state and its threefold agenda of development, globalization and imperialism. On this agenda see, inter alia, Petras/Vasapollo/Veltmeyer (2004); Petras and Veltmeyer (2001); and Saxe-Fernandez, et al. (2003).

Fourth. Latin American social movements are all too cognizant of the meaning of these institutions in terms both of their workings and agency, and their connection to the institutionality of neoliberal capitalist development and the agenda (and powerful interests) behind efforts to establish the new world order. Unfortunately, notwithstanding Eckstein’s ‘institutional’ approach (reference to historically grounded institutions formed to shape and limit ‘action’) her analysis of the dynamics of the social movements makes little reference to the workings of these institutions, or for that matter, and even more inexplicably, the Latin American ‘state’. Vague references to questions about its ‘structure’ and ‘strength’ do not take us far. In this regard, the paper simply assumes the existence of a minimalist state that has retreated from the role that the previous economic model (national developmentalist and populist) had assigned it in theory if not in practice. The assumption made is that it is in the interest--and thus the agenda—of the advocates (and agents) of a neoliberal form of capitalist development to weaken the state and subordinate it to international economic institutions that are easier to control. But in fact what has developed in the course of two decades of political reform is not the weakening of the state as such but its restructuring in the interest of the dominant capitalist class ambiguously referred to in official discourse as ‘the private sector’, as a result the capacity of workers, peasants and the ‘middle class and strata’ to influence government policy has been drastically reduced. In fact, the US state through the direct agency of adjunct institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, and the projection of its economic and political power, has managed to convert most democratically elected heads of state in Latin America into allies and subordinates. However, the political dynamics of this project (imperialism, hegemony) are not even conceptualised let alone discussed. They have a lot to do with the specific responses of the major social movements and widespread forms of ‘neoliberal resistance’ that emerged in the 1990s.

In regard to the emergence and institutionalization of the ‘new economic model’ (neoliberalism), again some of its more critical dynamics are not brought into any analytic focus or placed in theoretical perspective. For example, the economic restructuring process, which it engendered—ignoring, for the moment, the non-economic dimensions of ‘global restructuring’—had at least five aspects to it: (i) technological—the so-called ‘3rd technological revolution’, the innovation and incorporation into the production apparatus of new highly productive technologies; (ii) the transformation of the dominant mode of regulation of labour based on a ‘new regime of accumulation’ (fordism to postfordism); (iii) a

global process of industrial relocation/restructuring, creating thereby a ‘new international division of labour’); (iv) a restructuring of the capital-labour relation under mechanisms designed to compress wages and reduce the share of labour in national income (to increase the share of capital); and, of course (v) a restructuring of economic policy (structural adjustment) in the interest of creating a single global economy based on the workings of the ‘free market’ and ‘private enterprise’ (free market capitalism).

Fifth. The paper writes of the collapse of the old import-substitution industrialization (ISI) model in regards to trade, etc. as if its ‘collapse’, and abandonment, was a matter of fact or consensus (generally ‘discredited’) rather than ideology. As with the policy of privatization there was absolutely no empirical basis to the presumption (and widely disseminated assertion) that the state-led model of national development had failed or exhausted its limits. This is true even in regard to the oft-repeated assertion (and dutifully repeated by Eckstein) that ISI served to shield ‘inefficient enterprises from foreign competition’. It is clear—but not from the analysis given in the paper—that the turn away from the dominant model at the time (in the 1980s) towards neoliberalism was a matter of ideology, the determinants of which includes an ideological (neoconservative) response to conditions of world crisis in the 1970s, as well as the fiscal crisis of the early 1980s—not the Latin America debt crisis mentioned in the paper. The onset of this debt crisis in 1982-3 did not result, as the paper suggests, from ‘weak export sectors’ (and thus presumably from the failure of ISI) but occurred under historical conditions of (i) an unprecedented overseas expansion of bank capital in the late 1970s in the search for more profitable investments as well as a strategic solution to a persistent systemic or capitalist production crisis; (ii) an unprecedented increase of interest rates in the US, coupled with a marked deterioration in the terms of trade, creating, as it were a ‘scissors-squeeze’ on development and government finance; (iii) the failure of several experiments by military regimes with neoliberal macroeconomic policies (they all crashed and burned under conditions of the debt crisis); and (iv) the onset of a fiscal crisis generated by costs of reform in the form of a developmentalist and welfare state. In this context, the debt crisis, as the paper correctly points out, was used as a lever by ‘the international financial community’ (the International Financial Institutions or IFIs) to impose a neoliberal policy reform program—a package of IMF stabilisation World Bank adjustment measures that—and on this there was, and remains, a virtual consensus within the social movement sector—impacted negatively both on the economy and on people, particularly in the popular sector of ‘civil society’. In this institutional context the social movements throughout the 1990s, in their mobilising ideology, would make persistent and consistent reference to ‘el paquete’ (IMF austerity measures/structural reforms such as privatization) and ‘el paquetazo’—with more overt reference to the socioeconomic impacts of these reforms.

Six. Another dimension of the neoliberal restructuring process, which is dealt with in the paper but in a very limited way, relates to politics—the politics of adjustment—political conditions (good governance, etc.) needed to implement the model (on this see Veltmeyer, 2004c). In this regard, the paper conceptualises a process of political reform designed to institute a liberal-democratic or representational form of democracy, viewing this process rightly so in terms of a transition from a military (or bureaucratic authoritarian) regime to the rule of constitutional law and electoral systems (‘democracy’). But as mentioned above the dynamics of this process, more or less limited to a ten-year period from 1979 (Bolivia, Ecuador) to 1989 (Chile), are dealt with very summarily, with little to no discussion of the political dynamics that have a bearing on the emergent social movements.

Instead of a description, if not analysis, of the dynamics involved in the transition from military rule to the rule of law/electoral regimes the paper simply notes that the ‘repressive military regimes that ruled in most countries in the region’ [most countries?] were ‘relegated to the dustbin of history’ [but why?], albeit, she adds, ‘not before hundreds of thousands...were murdered...’ [not for me to quibble but there is some hyperbole or exaggeration in this statement].

Even more limiting, however, is the fact that a more crucial dimension of this democratization process is ignored entirely, namely the critical relation of the state to civil society and diverse efforts to democratise this relation in the interest of ‘good governance’ (political control from below rather than above, i.e., based on social consensus or, more precisely, a system of ‘social control’. On the dynamics of this process (participatory democracy/alternative development) Bolivia provides the best exemplar—a virtual laboratory of experiments in the institutional requirements for a neoliberal model in its best economic and political form.

The neoliberal model is generally perceived in Latin America, even in official circles as well as the ‘private sector’ as ‘dysfunctional’ (to use the wording of Carlos Slim, Mexico and Latin America’s wealthiest ‘investor’ and capitalist) or even, with reference to its economic and political outcomes as well as its social impacts, as ‘suicidal’ (La Jornada, May 12, 2004:12). This widespread view and negative assessment (supporters of neoliberalism constitute an exceedingly thin layer of government officials, advisors and supporters within the political and economic elite) has persisted, notwithstanding diverse efforts over the past decade to rescue the model by redesigning it with a new social policy and giving the reform process a ‘human face’ (Salop. 1992; Stiglitz, 1998). In the context of widespread disillusionment with neoliberalism and ‘market failure’ the 1990s was dominated by this search for a more viable and sustainable form of structural adjustment. But Eckstein’s paper gives no evidence of any awareness of this process and the political dynamics involved. The only oblique reference to these dynamics was to the policy of ‘political-economic decentralization’ as a measure to ‘weaken further central government power’ (p.2).

For the ‘neoliberal linked’ social movements in the region these dynamics were critical, influencing as they did their ‘responses’ to neoliberalism—and the associated projects of ‘development’, ‘globalization’ and imperialism’. References in the paper to various and sundry ‘mediating factors’ such as ‘the structure and strength of the state’ in shaping the response given to neoliberalism by diverse social movements are not particularly illuminating. More illuminating useful would have been a brief analysis of the actual ‘mediating’ role played by the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the process. On this issue the paper writes of NGOs as bearers of ‘new material resources’ as well as (and ‘more importantly’) ‘new ideas and social capital . . . [and] new conceptions of rights and . . . new identities’ (p.4). Not a hint of the fact that these NGOs were set up and contracted to provide an alternative to the direct action and ‘coordinated collective responses’ of the social movements to neoliberalism.

The NGOs in this context were not, as the paper suggests, bearers of ‘new global social and cultural trends [that] made their way to Latin America’ but agents of ‘imperialism’, bearers of the virtues of democracy (free elections) and capitalism (free markets). The ‘private voluntary associations’ in the ‘third sector’ were converted into economic and political development associations to promote the marriage of democracy and capitalism as well as a reformist approach to social change (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001). In this role and service

function, the NGOs were—and are—explicitly sent onto the frontlines of an impending battle, a protracted struggle against the neoliberal model, to dampen the smouldering fires of revolutionary ferment and to provide a reformist option to ‘the poor’ in its multitudinous forms: reform rather than revolution; local development rather than social movements; democracy without social movement; to seek social change in the available spaces within the structure of economic and political power rather than challenging this structure in direct action. In this context, the NGOs were not bearers of ‘social capital’ as much as promoters of a strategy that does not seek to change the distribution of, and access to, diverse forms of productive resources or capital (finance or credit, land, technology) but that builds on ‘social capital’ (the capacity to organize and act collectively), an asset that the poor themselves were assumed to ‘have in abundance’. The object is to accumulate social capital as a means of bringing about local development—‘alternative’ (participatory and equitable, and thus socially and politically sustainable)—without change in the power structure. The institutional and political dynamics of this process (see, inter alia, Veltmeyer and O’Malley, 2001), mediated by central governments in the region and ‘international financial institutions’ as well as development associations, have a lot to do with shaping the ‘coordinated collective responses’ of which Eckstein writes.

Social movements—the dynamics of mobilization

The body of the paper relates to the political dynamics of political mobilization associated with social movements that were either formed as a response to neoliberalism or in various ways affected, if not shaped, by it. The main focus is on ‘coordinated forms of collective resistance’ that have an ‘economic base’ but Eckstein prefaces her discussion of these movements with reference to alternative non-collective or individual responses, namely migration and emigration’, the second of which (reflected in given statistics on rapid urbanization) became more prevalent in the 1990s (true enough but no mention of the fact of resulting migrant remittances that in different countries like Mexico and Ecuador now constitutes the second major source of national revenues) as the first option became less viable.

The paper uses three major components of the neoliberal model as an organizational device, identifying specific movements (and making allusion to their political dynamics) as responses to specified neoliberal policies—(i) ‘reduction of trade and foreign investment restrictions’ (trade and financial ‘liberalization’?); (ii) ‘privatizations and public sector retrenchment’; and (iii) ‘price liberalizations and movements [sic] to minimise consumption’.

The question immediately arises: is this the best way to categorise and understand the major social movements in terms of their mobilisation dynamics, strategy, tactics, etc.? A question even arises as to whether this is a useful or accurate breakdown of neoliberalism as macroeconomic policy.

Some discussion or documentation would have helped settle this question (see Veltmeyer and Petras, 2000, for a different categorisation of the ‘Washington Consensus’ on ‘correct policy’, i.e., neoliberalism). Eckstein is correct to emphasise the need to break ‘neoliberalism’ down into its component parts given that different groups and classes are affected in different ways and to different degrees by different policies, and this might indeed be expected to impact on their responses. On the other hand, the dynamics of the major sociopolitical movements that she connects to neoliberalism, albeit very briefly (to ‘illustrate’ points of argument)—the MST in Brazil; the indigenous movement in Ecuador; the cocaleros

of Bolivia; and the Zapatistas in Mexico (a form of ‘agrarian resistance’ to trade and financial liberalization?)—are difficult to understand (thus explain) in terms of specific neoliberal policies. In fact, Eckstein herself recognises that while ‘analytically distinguishable’ resistance against ‘new reforms . . . often are fused with grievances having a range of roots’ (p.4). Take the MST for instance (on the dynamics of this movement see, inter alia, Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003b, 2004). Eckstein reviews its political dynamics (of class struggle?) under the rubric of ‘deepening . . . neoliberalism [that is] . . . the aggressive expansion of ‘export-oriented commercial farmers’ and the ‘capitalization of their operations’). But the struggle (and mobilisation tactics) of the MST, which the leadership itself categorises in class terms but she categorises as a ‘non-indigenous farm movement’, relates to ‘the land question’ (i.e., landlessness), a problem that predates and is not directly related to neoliberalism. How does the struggle relate to neoliberalism, which ‘came’ to Brazil relative late—in the regime established by Fernando Cardoso in 1994 (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003b). There is a connection to be sure but is trade liberalization the issue? Is it even at issue for the MST?

And what about CONAIE, the major organizational force behind an indigenous movement in Ecuador that has led the popular struggle against neoliberalism (Veltmeyer, 2004d). The significant feature of CONAIE as a social movement is its transformation, in the 1990s, from a class-based organization rooted in the land question (as well as indigenous rights and identity, etc.) into a broader indigenous movement concerned, first of all, with diverse indigenous issues but as of the late 1990s (around 1998) with ‘the national question’ (‘nada por los indios solos’—motto of the 2000 uprising), i.e., with the imposition of the neoliberal model in all of its ramifications and diverse policies (privatization, austerity measures, liberalisation, labour market deregulation, etc.). It is also not at all useful, or correct, to categorise this movement—one of the most dynamic in the region—in terms of ‘neoliberal trade-linked reforms’ (p.8). Even the Zapatista uprising and movement of ‘national liberation’ cannot be understood solely, or primarily, as a response to ‘neoliberal-linked grievances’ (p.8). True enough the irruption of this movement was staged to coincide with the inception of NAFTA, a critically important institutional means for advancing the neoliberal agenda. And Marcos himself in his ideological-theoretical discourse connected the movement to neoliberalism, although he did so not in terms of a response to globalization but to imperialism and its class agenda. In these terms, Marcos wrote of Eckstein’s categorisation of the movements, and thus presumed ‘analysis’ of their responses in the form of mobilisation, is even more problematic when it comes to FARC-EP, whose formation dates back to the 1960s and is one of the very few ‘armies of national liberation’ that was not destroyed by the state in its countermovement against insurrection. The brief discussion (pp.10-11) of ‘Latin America’s largest and most violent guerrilla movement of the 1990s’ in terms of its mobilisation responses centres erroneously on the drug trade originating in the peasant production of coca. To write of cocaine as having ‘fueled’ the movement (and mobilisational response) of FARC is misleading at best. To write of a shift in the [class] conflict between the government and FARC as ‘increasingly centred around cocaine, not ideology’ betrays a surprising ignorance (surprising given Eckstein’s obvious expertise in the area) of the fundamental dynamics of the struggle and the role of the US in this struggle, particularly as regards ‘Plan Colombia’, of which there is no mention, or the efforts of the US state to disguise the anti-insurgent struggle as a war against drug trafficking (Eckstein’s discussion of this issue is way off, a result no doubt of excessive reliance on official news sources—a general problem with the paper). Also, just as references to the dynamics of globalization seem to end in the late 1990s there is no mention or analysis of the more recent dynamics of [class] struggle related to both the neoliberal policies of the Colombian government and the connection of this agenda to US imperialism—again an issue of critical importance not only

to FARC (vis-à-vis understanding of its mobilisational response to neoliberalism) but to other social movements in the region. This deficiency in regards to a 'historically grounded institutional analysis' (Eckstein's presumed approach) of the dynamics of struggle also surfaces in the paper's brief (pp.11-12) overview of the cocalero movement in Bolivia. The brief remarks are accurate enough in their summary review and abstracted description of some recent political developments but they provide an extremely limited source of understanding the dynamics of popular struggle (and mobilisation strategy and tactics) in Bolivia today. Perhaps this is a function of brevity (one half page summary discussion) but . . . what points of argument does the paper seek to 'illustrate'? That the movement of the cocaleros led by Morales (what about the recent turn of Morales towards electoral politics via MAS?) is based on, or somehow connected to, the neoliberal policy of the 'reduction of trade and foreign investment restrictions'? As mentioned above the connection might be there but the description is weak and an analysis non-existent.

This problem in regard to the paper's analysis of social movements involved in 'agrarian resistance' to neoliberalism is even greater when it comes to the exceedingly brief discussion' of 'urban and industrial based movements' (pp.12-13). What is most striking about this discussion is that it focuses almost entirely on El Barzon, a movement of independent but bank-indebted farmers. Not only has this movement, once with a membership of over 750,000, almost disappeared but it is most peculiar to categorise it as 'urban and industrial based'. More relevant is the labour movement in the maquiladores. But discussion of this movement is limited to a short one paragraph concluding section of this part of the paper and this discussion is not contextualised in either historical or institutional terms, with needed reference to the broader labour movement in Mexico and Latin America and the neoliberal program of macroeconomic policies implemented over the course of the last two decades. Perhaps here, under the rubric of 'urban and industrial based movements', reference could have been made to the movement of unemployed workers in Argentina, arguably the most important (and until recently, the most dynamic) 'urban . . . movement' in Latin America today.

But how would this movement be categorized—with what connection to neoliberalism? As it is, this movement is not mentioned anywhere in the paper, despite the very broad array of movements canvassed in the paper and the extensive, albeit merely 'illustrative' and non-systematic, overview of the political landscape.

In regards to Eckstein's categorisation and discussion of movements in terms of their responses to a neoliberal policy of 'privatizations and public sector retrenchment' (pp.13-20) similar problems can be found. The focus of this rather impressionistic overview of diverse struggles centres on the urban labour movement, but except for an overview (and statistical breakdown for the years 1990 to 1995?) of the changing rhythm of strikes and protest activity (Table 3) the paper does not provide any systematic analysis of the labour movement. More surprisingly, the paper does not even contextualise in either historical or institutional terms, as per Eckstein's own professed approach, given evidence of a labour movement. First of all, there is no analysis whatsoever of the organizational dynamics of this movement. Thus instead of statistics on union membership or discussion of the changing structure of the working class (organised/unionised, unorganised/nonunionised; private vs. public sector; industrial, nonindustrial; factory, office, street) the paper provides a few uncontextualised statistics on 'employment and salaries' (wages?) and these only for the years 1985-1996, and even less relevant statistics on changes in 'US strike activity' for the years 1990-97 (in terms of 'decreased/increased'). There is no description, let alone analysis, of the dynamics of

struggle and mobilisation response to government policy over the years. Implementation of this policy vis-à-vis ‘privatizations and public sector retrenchment’ (what about ‘labour reform viz. a policy of ‘flexibilisation’, etc.?). This is surprising enough. More surprising is the lack of any discussion of the specific dynamics and social movements specifically associated with the policy of privatization and public sector retrenchment. The paper ‘illustrates’ the connection between government policy (neoliberalism) and mobilisation responses (social movements?) by abstracted reference to evidence of protest activities. But why no discussion of organised labour in the public sector and the dynamics of diverse responses in this sector to specific policy measures of this type.

Highly relevant cases of a mobilisation response are found in Ecuador vis-à-vis government efforts to privatise public enterprises in the oil and energy sectors.

The response of public sector workers in this connection in the 1990s was coordinated with CONAIE and other social organizations via MCS (the Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales). Other important cases relates to the longstanding and ongoing (and important for illustrative purposes!) struggle of electrical workers in Mexico and recent efforts of the Bolivian government to privatise water, gas and other natural resources. The success of the popular movement in resisting these efforts is of critical importance both politically and theoretically, but for some reason (?) none of these ‘neoliberal connected’ anti-privatisation struggles are discussed, let alone contextualised institutionally in terms of government legislation (the law of capitalization, for example). The paper makes brief reference to the response of organised labour to initial efforts at privatization in the 1980s in cases of Bolivia and Brazil. However, developments in this area in the late 1990s and the 21st millennium are much more relevant.

The paper does make brief reference to Cochabamba’s ‘water war’ but does so in the context not of the dominant anti-privatisation struggle but in response to a policy of ‘price liberalisation’ and a movement to ‘minimise costs of consumption’ (pp.20, 27). The lack of a grounded or contextualised analysis (no documentation of the neoliberal agenda in regards to privatization), particularly as relates to recent struggles since 2000 reduces considerably the usefulness of the paper in helping us conceptualise and understand the dynamics of globalisation and mobilisation.

The last part of the paper is a review (but no analysis as to any patterns, etc.) of diverse responses to neoliberalism in the form of ‘price liberalizations and movements to minimise consumption’. First of all, why categorise and discuss neoliberalism in this context under the rubric ‘liberalisation’ rather than ‘deregulation’? At issue here are what in the Latin American context is generally referred to as ‘IMF reforms’ (i.e., austerity or stabilisation measures such as the lifting of price controls and currency devaluation). These IMF-mandated measures generally precede or are packaged together with a series of longer-term structural adjustment policy measures but, as Eckstein points out at the outset, their impact and the political responses to them, can and should be differentiated—not only analytically but politically. In politically specific terms responses to this type of policy seems to have been generally in the form of immediate or spontaneous form of riots’ sparked by price hikes related to fuel/electricity and the cost of food, transportation, education and other consumer goods and services (Walton...). Of course, riots or consumer revolts are a form of collective response and can be identified, and categorised, as a form of neoliberal resistance. But has this response been ‘organizationally coordinated’ (as the paper suggests) or episodic? And what are the institutional and political dynamics of this and related, more organised, forms of

‘collective resistance? Again the data provided in the paper (on consumer price activity) do not relate to developments past 1997—in fact given for only two years, hardly the basis for a comparative analysis of regional trends under changing conditions and responses to specific policies. Yet, with specific reference to 1995 data collected and coded by Eckstein herself, the paper concludes that ‘rarely did austerity policies in themselves stir unrest (consumer ‘revolts’ or ‘protests’)’. This ‘unrest’, the paper adds, ‘tended to occur where political divisiveness and power struggles prepared the ground and where governments were weak and unpopular, as well as organizationally coordinated’ (p.22). How this conclusion is reached on the basis of, or with reference to, such limited data is unclear. No correlations are made between given data on consumer price increases and the irruption of ‘consumer revolts’, even with these limited data. As it is the paper ‘illustrates’ this point of argument by abstracted reference to developments in Ecuador where the government at the time could certainly be categorised as ‘weak and unpopular’ and misplaced reference to an ‘ambitious spending program’ of the Cardoso government in Brazil’ (but strong anti-inflation measures yes, ambitious spending program no). According to the presented data (Table 6) Brazil is one of only four countries (also Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) with a fivefold increase in the price of food from 1990 to 1995/1997 but how does fact relate to the irruption of food riots. Do such eruption only occur as the paper suggests where resistance is ‘coordinated’ and governments are relatively strong and popular as it was in Brazil at the time? As for Ecuador increases in the prices of fuel and food was certainly a ‘political issue’, generating widespread mobilisations against unpopular and relatively weak governments, and resistance was certainly coordinated but of 1000 protest actions ‘significant social conflicts’) recorded from 1996 to 1998, in a context of a deepening economic crisis and growing poverty (from 31% in 1988 to 56% in 1998) at least 30% had to do with a struggle against the government’s privatisation agenda (Equipo de Coyuntura del CAAP, 1997, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 1998a).

Conclusion

The dynamics of globalization and mobilization are critical features of the political landscape in Latin America and Eckstein’s paper is a useful point of departure for further research and a needed analysis of the process involved. This is its strength and value. At the same time her paper raises more questions than it settles. This is not necessarily a weakness but it does point us towards the need for further research—and more debate. It is hoped that this paper advances this debate but judging by the questions raised by Eckstein’s paper I would argue the need, first of all, for a serious discussion about the most appropriate (that is, useful) conceptual and theoretical framework for an analysis of the dynamics involved in the global process of development and change. It is clear enough that this analysis should specify both structural and strategic factors, and take into account the associated objective (economic) and subjective (political) conditions. However, as suggested by the paper there are available several schools of thought, each providing its own toolbox of ideas for theoretically simplifying the complexity of reality, thus making analysis possible but at the expense of capturing a part of the whole, and providing but a partial explanation. Without venturing into the specifics of the debate on this issue I would argue the need to reconstitute Marxist class analysis as the best method for capturing in thought the most critical variables at work in the process of change and development. This means cutting through all the intellectual gibberish that has surrounded Marxism as method and theory. It also means taking seriously some of the criticisms that have been levelled against Marxist practice and theory as well as taking up the challenge presented by advocates of alternative approaches. The state of current knowledge about the dynamics of change and development, particularly as regards the issues

addressed by Eckstein in this paper, suggests that a Marxist approach to an analysis of these dynamics is both needed and on the agenda. But this is a matter of further debate.

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