

## PREFACE

Ours is a paradoxical time. On the one hand, it is a time of great advances and amazing changes, dramatically brought about by the information and communication revolutions and the revolutions in electronics, genetics, and biotechnology. On the other hand, however, it is a time of disquieting regressions, a return of the social evils that appeared to have been or about to be overcome. The return of slavery and slavish work; the return of high vulnerability to old sicknesses that seemed to have been eradicated and appear now linked to new pandemics like HIV/AIDS; the return of the revolting social inequalities that gave their name to the social question at the end of the nineteenth century; in sum, the return of the specter of war, perhaps now more than ever a world war, although whether cold or not is as yet undecidable. The paradox resides in the following. On the one hand, the technical conditions to fulfill the promises of Western modernity appear today to be finally in place; on the other hand, it has become increasingly obvious that such promises were never farther from being fulfilled than today. The promises of liberty, equality, solidarity, and peace, heralded by Western modernity, constituted the major legacy of what came to be designated as social emancipation. Modern political struggles focused on the conception of such promises and on the ways to fulfill them or, on the contrary, on the ways to prevent their fulfillment. Thereby occurred the division between capitalists and socialists, liberals and Marxists, reformists and revolutionaries, nationalists and internationalists. For different reasons (at least apparently), such divisions today seem anachronistic or incapable of accounting for the cleavages that traverse the world. The difference between capitalists and socialists appears to have been totally and irretrievably resolved in favor of the capitalists. Moreover, if one considers that neoliberalism, contrary to what is commonly maintained, is not a new form of liberalism but rather a new form of conservatism, both liberalism and Marxism seem to be undergoing

today a deep crisis as well. The same could be said of the cleavage between reformism and revolution. On the one hand, the idea of social revolution seems to have been erased from the political agenda, even the agenda of those who still consider themselves revolutionaries; on the other hand, reformism, that is to say, the idea of a gradual and legal improvement of the patterns of sociability, has been replaced by the concepts of governability and governance. Finally, the opposition between nationalists and internationalists seems to have lost its meaning in a time that designates itself as a time of globalization.

These changes are, or appear to be, so deep that the idea of a paradigmatic shift seems the only adequate one to characterize our time. It may be formulated in two different ways: ours is too late a time to be post-revolutionary and too premature to be pre-revolutionary; or, alternatively, ours is a time of modern problems (the unfulfilled promises of modernity) for which there are no modern solutions (those based on the above-mentioned dichotomies now in disarray). The first formulation owes more to the old paradigm than the second one. I prefer the latter because it captures more incisively the idea that, to my mind, should inform progressive thinking and action in our time: what is at stake is the reinvention of social emancipation itself.

This book is the first in a series of five that present the main results of an international research project that I conducted under the title *Reinventing Social Emancipation: Toward New Manifestos*. The project's core idea is that the action and thought that sustained and gave credibility to the modern ideals of social emancipation are being profoundly questioned by a phenomenon that, although not new, has reached in the past decades such an intensity that it has ended up redefining the contexts, objectives, means, and subjectivities of the social and political struggles. I mean what is commonly designated as globalization. As a matter of fact, what we usually call globalization is just one of the forms of globalization, namely neoliberal globalization, undoubtedly the dominant and hegemonic form of globalization. Neoliberal globalization corresponds to a new system of capital accumulation, a more intensely globalized system than the previous ones. It aims, on the one hand, to desocialize capital, freeing it from the social and political bonds that in the past guaranteed some social distribution; on the other hand, it works to subject society as a whole to the market law of value, under the presupposition that all social activity is better organized when organized under the aegis of the market. The main consequence of this double change is the extremely unequal distribution of the costs and opportunities brought about by neoliberal globalization inside the world system. Herein resides the reason for the exponential increase of the social inequalities between rich and poor countries, and between the rich and the poor inside the same country.

The project's assumption is that this form of globalization, though hegemonic, is not the only one and, in fact, has been increasingly confronted by another form of globalization. This other form, an alternative, counter-

hegemonic form of globalization, is constituted by a series of initiatives, movements and organizations that fight against neoliberal globalization through local/global linkages, networks, and alliances. Their motivation is the aspiration to a better, fairer and more peaceful world that they deem possible, and to which they believe they are entitled. This form of globalization is still emerging. Its most dramatic manifestation occurs in the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre, of which three editions have already taken place (2001, 2002, 2003).

To my mind, this alternative globalization, in its confrontation with neoliberal globalization, is what is paving a new way toward social emancipation. Such a confrontation, which may be metaphorically characterized as a confrontation between the North and the South, tends to be particularly intense in countries of intermediate development, or semi-peripheral countries. It is, therefore, in these countries that the potentialities and limits of the reinvention of social emancipation manifest themselves more clearly. This is the reason why four of the five countries in which the project was conducted are countries of intermediate development in different continents. The five countries in question are: Brazil, Colombia, India, Mozambique, and South Africa.

The new conflicts between the North and the South occur in the most diverse domains of social, economic, political, and cultural activity. In some of these domains, however, the alternatives created by counter-hegemonic globalization are more visible and consistent, not only because there the conflicts are more intense, but also because the initiatives, movements and progressive organizations have reached higher levels of consolidation and organizational density. I selected the following five domains or themes to be analyzed in each of the five countries included in the project: participatory democracy; alternative production systems; emancipatory multiculturalism, cultural justice and citizenship; protection of biodiversity and the recognition of rival knowledges against neoliberal intellectual property rights; and new labor internationalism. To learn about the choice of countries and themes, as well as the assumptions underlying this project and the challenges it aims to face, the reader should go to the general introduction of this volume.

The series comprises five volumes.<sup>1</sup> The first three volumes deal with the above-mentioned five themes. To be sure, the themes are not watertight; there is intertextuality, now implicit, now explicit, among the different books. This first volume is concerned with participatory democracy. The main thesis of this book is that the hegemonic model of democracy (liberal, representative democracy), while prevailing on a global scale, guarantees no more than low-intensity democracy, based on the privatization of public welfare by more or less restricted elites, on the increasing distance between representatives and the represented, and on an abstract political inclusion made of concrete social

exclusion. Parallel to this hegemonic model of democracy, other models have always existed, however marginalized or discredited, such as participatory democracy or popular democracy. Recently, participatory democracy has been gaining a new dynamics. It engages mainly subaltern communities and social groups that fight against social exclusion and the trivialization of citizenship and are propelled by the aspiration to more inclusive social contracts and high-intensity democracy. I mean local initiatives in urban or rural contexts that gradually develop bonds of inter-recognition and interaction with parallel initiatives, thus giving rise to the formation, as yet embryonic, of transnational networks of participatory democracy. To my mind, one of the major conflicts between the North and the South results from the confrontation between representative and participatory democracy. Such a confrontation, which derives from the fact that representative democracy has systematically denied the legitimacy of participatory democracy, will be resolved only to the extent to which such denial is replaced by the development of forms of complementarity between the two forms of democracy that may contribute to deepen one another. Such complementarity paves one of the ways to the reinvention of social emancipation.

This volume opens with a general introduction in which I succinctly present some of the general questions for which the project seeks answers. These questions are treated in detail in the last volume of the series. An introduction to the theme of participatory democracy, written by Leonardo Avritzer and myself, follows. There we try to identify the major problems of contemporary democratic theory, focusing in particular on the contribution of participatory democracy and having in mind the studies and analyses conducted in the project and presented in the next chapters.

The book is divided into four parts. In the first part, entitled *Social Movements and Democratic Aspiration*, the potentialities of participatory democracy and the obstacles to its development are dealt with in the light of concrete social experiences of the last two decades.

In chapter one, D. L. Sheth contrasts, on the one hand, the discourse and practices of India's social movements fighting for forms of local participatory democracy, capable of "returning democracy to the people," with, on the other, the discourse and practices of urban elites that consider such popular forms to be a threat to the politics of the national state and the market economy. The cultural embeddedness of India's social movements in the Gandhian conceptions of self-government (*swaraj*) illustrates the expansive and multicultural potential for democratic innovation in our time.

In chapter two, Sakhela Buhlungu shows the decisive contribution of the social movements and the structures of participatory democracy that shaped them toward the struggle against *apartheid* in South Africa in the 1980s. The author analyzes critically the way in which participatory democracy gradually declined as the transition to a post-*apartheid* society went on becoming

consolidated. Such decline was in part due to the fact that the new democratic state gave total priority to representative democracy while discouraging participatory democracy, even though the latter was inscribed in the Constitution.

In chapter three, Rodrigo Uprimny and Mauricio García Villegas explain how a state institution that is basically very far from the citizens' democratic aspirations, such as courts, may, under specific given circumstances, be articulated positively with regards to progressive social movements and provide positive answers to their claims. The court in question is a special one, the Constitutional Court of Colombia, created in 1992 in an equally special social and political context dominated by the political changes that led to the 1991 Constitution. The authors analyze the progressive judicial responses to the social claims of the indigenous and gay movements, unions, and mortgage debtors.

In the second part, entitled *Women's Struggle for Democracy*, the analysis focuses in particular on women's struggles for the recognition of their rights of democratic participation in the public space.

In chapter four, Shamim Meer studies the changes that affected the different social movements during the period of struggle against apartheid and in the post-apartheid era, focusing, in particular, on women's movements, especially women workers' movements. Given the extremity of apartheid capitalist repression, women activists engaged in liberation organizations at the same time as they organized separately as women. The emergence of a black elite in the post-apartheid period, however, did not significantly change the situation of the majority of the population, let alone that of women workers. The answer to this situation has materialized in recent years through new social movements and the initiatives of citizens with roots in the most poor and marginalized sectors of society, and through their struggle for survival and dignity.

In chapter five, Conceição Osório analyzes the theme of the participation of women in the Mozambican political arena, in particular in political parties. In an approach that converges with that of Shamim Meer, Osório shows that, in the context of the sexual discrimination that traverses the various domains of Mozambican society, the struggle by women for "occupation" of the political field and for full participation as a collective actor is an internally diversified struggle. While some "occupation" strategies contribute to challenge and weaken male dominance in the political arena, others end up reinforcing that same dominance.

In chapter six, focusing on the relation between union leadership and the Woman's Committees, Maria José Arthur analyzes the tension between class identity and sexual difference in the union movement in Mozambique. Tracing the various trajectories of several women union activists, the author shows how, as a consequence of the reorganization of unions in the 1990s,

the identity of the “woman worker” was redefined in a new framework affected by the privatization process and the deterioration of the living conditions of the majority of the population. This is the context in which the author describes both the discourses that justify the discrimination against women on the part of union leadership and the women’s strategies and practices that aim at the recognition of new articulations of the identities of woman and worker.

The third part, entitled *Struggling for Democracy in a Scenario of Civil War and Fragmented Despotisms: The Case of Colombia*, reveals how an aspiration to a substantive, high-density democracy can arise in the most difficult of circumstances, as is so well illustrated in the case of Colombia. In a situation that can be characterized as the degree-zero of social emancipation, the struggle for democracy, aside from its extreme difficulty, assumes surprising profiles and intriguing meanings.

In chapter seven, Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Ana María Jaramillo concentrate on the “pactist” experience in Colombia. Through the detailed study of two local situations, in Medellín and Boyacá Occidental, the authors show how pacts between the national government and certain local forces allow for handling the tension between macro-institutional forms and multiple, diffuse armed conflicts. In the cases under analysis, however, the consequence of such pacts is that the state acknowledges the power of armed groups and the sacrifice of the democratic rights of citizens in the name of peace and the preservation of the community. In such conditions, the “pactist” solutions, even though desirable at the national scale, may have perverse consequences at the local scale, compromising the possibility of emancipatory dynamics and maintaining the power of the armed groups and those sectors of the society that resort to violence.

In chapter eight, María Clemencia Ramírez analyzes the movement of the Putumayo *cocaleros* (peasants who grow and gather coca) in Colombian Amazonia. This is a civil movement fighting for citizenship rights *vis-à-vis* the state and especially the armed forces. The latter insist in doubly excluding the peasants—as drug dealers and as complicit with the guerrillas. Taking advantage of the participatory democratic spaces granted by the Constitution, the *cocaleros’* aim is to impose an alternative identity, that of a group of Putumayo citizens who are independent both of drug dealing and of the guerrillas.

In chapter nine, Mauricio Romero studies the mobilization of the banana workers in the Urabá region (Colombia), reporting the struggle waged by the union of workers in the agribusiness industry (Sintrainagro) to raise the sector’s workers from the condition of subjects to the condition of citizens. Romero describes the form in which the Urabá banana workers, used to playing the role of victims, managed to reach protection, security and political participation in exchange for loyalty to a “political-economic order” controlled by the army and paramilitary forces. In their struggle for better

living conditions, the Urabá banana workers had the international solidarity of Danish, Finnish, and Spanish unions, as well as that of the International Union of Foodstuffs Workers.

Part four, entitled *Participatory Democracy in Action*, is devoted to experiments in participatory democracy that were successful and reached a certain level of consolidation, but also to lesser-known instances of democratic participation and deliberation emerging in the most unlikely contexts.

In chapter ten María Teresa Uribe de H presents one such instance, the dramatic experience of a small village named San José de Apartadó, located in the region of Urabá. This village, confronted with the armed conflict in its territory—a conflict involving the army, the guerrillas, and the paramilitary groups—decided by democratic deliberation to establish itself as a “community of peace.” It organized itself accordingly, underwriting a public pact, indeed a local constitution, by whose terms its members agreed not to get involved with any of the armed actors operating in the region, to demand rather their respect, and to produce their own autonomous social organization. This initiative, which gave rise to transnational solidarity, illustrates the possibilities of resistance in the most adverse circumstances, though also its high costs.

In chapter eleven, I present a detailed analysis of the participatory budget of the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, perhaps the instance of participatory democracy that has earned the greatest recognition worldwide. I pay particular attention to the impact of the participatory budget on the distribution of public resources in favor of the neediest social groups, to the mechanisms of participation, and to the complex interactions between citizens, autonomous social movements, instances of participatory budgeting, the Municipal Executive, and the Municipal Legislative Assembly.

In chapter twelve, Leonardo Avritzer compares the participatory budget of Porto Alegre with the budget of Belo Horizonte in order to show that the elitist theories of democracy, so influential in the North, particularly in North America, are indeed negated by the experiences of participatory democracy. The latter have proved to be capable of handling administrative complexity at the same time that they renovate the political agenda by introducing new principles of justice in the distribution of public resources.

Chapter thirteen, by Patrick Heller and Thomas Isaac, introduces another significant experiment in participatory democracy, the decentralized planning of the state of Kerala, in India. This experiment, undertaken under the auspices of the Communist Party of India—Marxist (CPM), consisted in transferring investment decisions to local communities by means of mobilizing participation. The engagement of “civil society,” formerly viewed with some suspicion, contributed to having actors and social groups, usually marginalized *vis-à-vis* the political process, effectively included. The articulation between democracy and social justice was thereby deepened.

Chapter fourteen, written by Emir Sader, is a general commentary on the chapters included in this book. The author interpellates the texts from the standpoint of a broad political horizon in order to highlight themes and problems that may escape analyses centered on case studies.

As I have already mentioned, this volume is the first in a series of five volumes. A brief reference to the remaining volumes is therefore in order.

Volume two, entitled *Another Production Is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon*, deals, on the one hand, with non-capitalist production alternatives that for the past two decades have been gaining new life in their resistance to the social exclusion and wild exploitation brought about by neoliberal globalization; on the other hand, it deals with workers' new struggles against such exploitation, pointing to a new labor internationalism. Alternative models to capitalist development, generally known as solidary economy, are analyzed, and case studies of popular economic organizations, cooperatives, communitarian or collective management of the land, and associations of local development are presented. Also analyzed are the new forms of the conflict between capital and labor, derived, on the one hand, from the end of the Cold War and, on the other, from the fact that in the last two decades labor has become a global resource, yet without the emergence of a global market. From this disjunction resulted the weakening of the union movement as we know it. Meanwhile, it is clear today that labor solidarity is reconstituting itself under new forms, both on a local and national level, as well as on a global level. The book deals in detail with some of these new forms.

Volume three, entitled *Another Knowledge Is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, tackles the struggles and politics of recognition of difference that in the past two decades have been confronting imperial identities, false universalisms, the coloniality of power, and imperial epistemology, which are as germane to historical capitalism as the exploitation of wage labor. The confrontation among rival knowledges and the more and more unequal access to information and knowledge as a consequence of the latter's global mercantilization acquire special relevance. Such confrontation derives from the latest advances in biology, biotechnology and micro-electronics, which have transformed the wealth of biodiversity into one of the most precious and sought after "natural resources." Since most of this biodiversity is located in countries of the South and sustained by popular, peasant or indigenous knowledges, the issue (and the conflict) consists in deciding how to protect such biodiversity and such knowledges from the voracity with which the scientific, technological, and industrial knowledge transforms them into patentable objects and knowledges. The struggles and movements for self-determination and multicultural human rights are another object of study, as are the movements for the recognition of popular knowledges concerning biodiversity, medicine, environmental impact, and natural calamities.

Volume four, entitled *Voices of the World*, is a different book from the previous ones. Rather than focusing on the scientific and social analysis of alternatives, it focuses on the discourse and practical knowledge of the protagonists of such alternatives. One of the core concerns of the project *Reinventing Social Emancipation* is to contribute to renovating the social sciences (see the Introduction). One of the paths of renovation resides in confronting the knowledge the social sciences produce with other knowledges—practical, plebeian, common, tacit knowledges—which, although being an integral part of the social practices analyzed by the social sciences, are always ignored by the latter. In this book, voice is given to activist leaders of social movements, initiatives and organizations, many of which are studied in the previous volumes. To this effect, long interviews were conducted and transcribed.

Finally, volume five, entitled *Reinventing Social Emancipation*, presents my theoretical, analytical, and epistemological reflection upon the major themes of this project and its main results. In addition, it reflects on the project itself as the construction of a scientific community under conditions and according to rules largely outside the conventional models.

Sixty-one researchers participated in this project; more than fifty-three initiatives were analyzed. A project of such proportions was possible only thanks to a demanding series of conditions. In the first place, adequate funding was available; I am most grateful to the MacArthur Foundation for financial support. Secondly, the project was made possible by a number of coordinators, one in each country, who helped me to select the themes and researchers, and finally to bring the various strands of the research to conclusion. I was fortunate enough to have the collaboration of Sakhela Buhlungu in South Africa, Maria Célia Paoli in Brazil, Mauricio García Villegas in Colombia, Shalini Randeria and Achyut Yagnik in India, and Teresa Cruz e Silva in Mozambique. My most heartfelt gratitude to all of them.

This project would not have been possible without the support of a dedicated and highly competent Secretariat. Sílvia Ferreira, Paula Meneses and Ana Cristina Santos shared administrative, scientific, and editorial tasks, but they all did a little bit of everything. In the course of three years, they accomplished a remarkable amount of work, creating the best conditions to make my meetings with the country coordinators and the researchers productive, to meet all of the researchers' needs and requests, and to facilitate the production of all the texts. Theirs was a Herculean task, and I am only too happy to mention this here in order to keep it from lying buried in the many pages of this series of books.

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collaborator and dear friend of more than ten years. She is the recipient of my most deeply felt gratitude.

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Boaventura de Sousa Santos

#### Note

- 1 Besides this English edition, this series is also being published in Brazil (Civilização Brasileira), Mexico (Fondo de Cultura Económica), Italy (Cittá Aperta Edizioni), and Portugal (Afrontamento).