

Discussion Workshop on Mapping Social Movements 25th August 2008

The workshop on Mapping Social [Movements](#) took place on the 25th of August in CEPES between 9am and 2pm. 26 people were invited, amongst them social leaders, academics and movement sympathizers. Although some of those attending had been previously interviewed during information gathering sessions, others had not. Despite the fact that 13 people confirmed their attendance at the workshop, the number of attendees was less on the actual date. Those who participated in the workshop were:

1. Fernando Eguren
2. María Burneo
3. Javier Torres
4. Laureano Del Castillo
5. Alejandra Alayza
6. Custodio Arias
7. Isamu Okada
8. César Gamboa
9. Alberto Barandiarán
10. Anahí Durand

And the three members of the research team:

11. Anthony Bebbington
12. Martin Scurrah
13. Claudia Bielich

The workshop began with the presentation of the study and the principal findings. The investigating team presented the main points in the study and gave a summary of the mapping of social movements, [using a power point presentation](#).

Fernando Eguren, President of CEPES, was the official commentator. He highlighted the importance of such a paper and the relevance of the issues discussed. His main points revolved around the need to revise and refine some of the terms and concepts. For example, the text asserts that Velasco was *authoritarian* and *populist* and then uses the same terminology to describe Fujimori. Eguren felt it was necessary to define these concepts more precisely as both presidents had very distinct characteristics. In another instance, Eguren questioned whether in discussions regarding social movements terms such as *class*, and *class struggle* have simply been replaced with terms such as *actors* and *social movements*. Moreover, there is no clear idea of structure (as opposed to that associated with concepts of class).

On the other hand, it would also be beneficial to refine those terms which are now in use, particularly the phrase *Social Movements*. According to Eguren, “you say: ‘Social Movements seek an alternative vision of society.’ Instead, shouldn’t Social Movements be questioning the norms upon which society is based?” Few of the social movements identified in the document undertake this questioning (with the exception of the indigenous and the decentralist movements). Moreover, the text affirms we have not found SM on the political right, but the definition used confines itself to SM from the left. Eguren then wondered whether the change from a leftist tendency in the seventies to a dominance of the right in the nineties could also be considered a Social Movement. Was there not a SM around the phenomenon of Hernando De Soto and company?

It is important to take into account that SMs are also swayed by external players such as the media, or by those in opposition. Therefore: does a SM define itself by its membership or by its observers? Similarly, among those terms coined in the mapping exercise, one would have to be careful with the distinction between an “altruistic” SM and an “egotistic” SM, as many egotistic SMs have objectives that can work to benefit society at large.

Eguren found the discussion of the differences between *Poor* and *Victim* interesting, and it reminded him of the advantages of a victim status (“Capital Victimario”) used by indigenous peoples (particularly in Bolivia) during negotiations: “You conquered me, therefore you owe me”.

In addition, it would be interesting to see up to what point SMs are important as a form of political participation. This could explain their persistence and continuity in a system without other effective channels for participation or reform.

Finally, Eguren noted with interest that SMs reject the definitions of poverty offered by multilateral entities and by the government, and underlined the importance of this fact. Whilst SMs may not yet have an alternative vision of society, they do have one for poverty.

Once Eguren finished commenting on the text, the discussion was opened up to all those present. The discussion was divided into two parts. The first part looked at the mapping of social movements. The second part discussed which case studies would be the most appropriate for the next phase of the study.

Debate over the Mapping

A large range of themes were discussed. We have compiled a list of **specific changes** that should be made to the report. Among them:

1. Specify that the phrase “extractive industry” refers not only to mining, but also to fishing and oil and gas (the mapping exercise centers on mining).
2. The People’s Ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo) is not part of the central government, as is written in the text, but is a constitutionally established, independent organism which monitors the state.
3. Revise the use of the term “gremio” (union). Organisations such as the CCP and CNA are defined as unions, but those other federations which form part of the Conveagro are also unions.
4. To highlight that the role of the Prime Minister’s Office has changed over time.
5. Specify what exactly is understood by an NGO, since for instance, in legal terms DAR is not an NGO while AIDSESEP is.*
6. The agrarian movement always demanded land and never territory (error on page 49).

The discussion of more general issues centred on the following:

* The issue here is that, under Peruvian law, almost all civil society organizations are registered as “not-for-profit civil associations”, whether they be organizations or federations representing organized segments of the population (peasants, indigenous people, poor urban women, etc) or non representative not-for-profit organizations commonly referred to as “NGOs”.

The role of NGOs and of political parties was discussed. Some participants affirmed that NGOs were not part of SMs, not even those NGOs which were characterized as SMs in the report, such as the environmental movement. No consensus was reached, but it did highlight the existence of tensions between NGOs and popular organizations on the issue of representation, a conflict which is mentioned in the mapping report. It would be necessary to investigate to what extent this is a class conflict. It is also important to point out that competition for international resources and funding is another source of conflict.

Political parties. The workshop participants questioned the need for SMs to be politically aligned. It was even suggested that the mapping gave the impression of being “very seventies” in its outlook. Moreover, it was proposed that this relationship is no longer necessary and that SMs are creating their own parallel political projects.

The current weakness of political parties has advantages and disadvantages for SMs. On the up side, it creates new spaces. The down side is that when the time comes to form alliances, there is no real available organization with which to work. Thus, SMs can also generate political leadership and can form spaces within which to accrue political power, a platform from which political projects and new parties can emerge. (The party-movement relationship can flow both ways).

A key point in the discussions is that of **identities**. The mapping recognized the difficulty in distinguishing the boundaries between movements. There are often overlaps. The workshop acknowledged that perhaps it is not a question of overlaps but of multiple identities. It is important to look at how identities are constructed and their relationship with SMs. As it is, actors can change their discourse in direct proportion to their negotiating capacity. Changes in the discourse seem to go hand in hand with strategies for achieving objectives. It also allows for the development of identities.

On this theme, it is also interesting to look at the related subject of leadership. The subject of multiple identities reflects opportunism and the ability to take advantage of different situations. In relation to strategy formation, it was suggested that the variable of “power” should be made more explicit to make note of power as a variable in the logic of how strategies vary over time, in the same way that identities vary.

A related theme is that of the **boundaries** between movements. In practice, the boundary between, for example, the agrarian, indigenous and extractive industry movements is very mobile. Who defines the boundaries? And up to which point are these distinct movements or part of something much larger? In a similar way, certain movements have served as a platform for the emergence of others. For example, the labor movement fathered the campesino, agrarian and regionalist movements. These observations give rise to the question of whether the scheme used within the report is too rigid to capture this flux.

In relation to **claims (reivindicaciones)**, it is important to distinguish between those movements which have a philosophy of “I fight for my group” versus those which function under a more universal banner.

Hotly debated were the **terms, concepts and definitions** utilized within the report. Among the different themes discussed we find:

1. Regional movements are discussed. Are they territorial movements (making regional demands)? Or are they national spaces and networks which put forward regional issues? Within the regional social movements there is such a great variety of SMs and agendas that it is difficult to place them all within the same category. Should we talk of regional SMs? Or SMs with links to decentralization? Could it be perhaps a decentralist movement?
2. The distinction between environmental movements and the movement concerning extractive industries. The perceptions and discourses in the public debate are different from those we use within our analytical framework. For example, Grufides is seen in the public eye to be environmentalist, but in the mapping it is firmly placed within the extractive industry movement. Is it problematic to use concepts which vary from those used in public debate?
3. Explain where the categories used in the environmental movement come from (conservationist, parquista, etc)
4. Construction of existing categories: In what way can it be said that the feminist SM is non-existent at the moment?
5. Not to confuse visibility (extractive) with impact (feminist).
6. Not to underestimate the strength of class (clasismo) as a motivating factor.
7. To look at SMs at different stages takes away their strength. Discourses reemerge and are rearticulated. It would be good to capture the mutations that occur over time, in which SMs related to a theme “x” can mutate into SMs related to different themes.
8. In the definition of SM it is said they should have an alternative vision of society, and among the objectives we listed is a change of model. Why say they are radical instead of anti-systemic? Are they anti-systemic? Alternately, many phenomena which the report classifies as SMs do not have such alternate visions but rather seek changes within the dominant model.
9. Is the language of SMs useful in the Peruvian context? Does it reflect our society? If this is not the right language, what is? There was an uncertainty which showed through in the discussions to which no solution was put forward.
10. How to discuss poverty? Because poverty is also a discourse, which allows us to identify what is the problem and what to do about it; those interviewed insisted on a different way of defining poverty.
11. To be careful with the so-called “egotistical” SMs because they can also fight for universal principles.
12. The notion of an *agrarian* movement was questioned. It is difficult to place the claims of CCP and Conveagro within a single movement.

During the workshop a series of **SMs and/or organizations deemed missing** in the mapping were mentioned. Among them:

1. The ronderos, which were very important in the seventies (and even had their own legislation during the first García government) and in the nineties.
2. REMURPE. Is there a decentralist movement?
3. An urban movement
4. A movement associated with consumers
5. National Board for the Fight Against Poverty (La Mesa Nacional de la Lucha contra la Pobreza). Where to put it?

In finalizing the first part of the discussions the participants touched upon the different ways of approaching the theme of SM: 1) actors, 2) discourses and 3) problems.

Case Studies

It was maintained that the best way to approach the case studies was by laying out the problems first. As such, the case studies should each refer to a particular problem area. Among the participants there was a general consensus on the subjects for the case studies. These were:

1. **Natural Resources.** Some participants suggested that it was most important to focus on access to resources, others that one had to go further. It would enable an exploration of the indigenous SM, that of the extractive industries, as well as the environmental and Human Rights SMs.
2. **Decentralization.** Study the regional movements.
3. **Labor.** Including unions, but going further afield.
4. **Urban themes.** This could refer to poor women or how the barrios (shanty towns) are organized today, which could look at the idea of a shanty towns' movement (movimiento barrial) (even if the paper states that the shanty towns' movement no longer exists - not all participants were convinced of this).
5. **Campesino.** Which can include the agrarian or coca movements.
6. **Indigenous.** Some participants considered that studying the indigenous movement from within the rubric of natural resources weakened its richness, and that this SM deserved independent study.

Regardless of the case study, each one must make a careful analysis of the following themes:

- Access to power
- Access to natural resources
- Access to services
- Access to employment
- Access to the means for defining problems and identifying what is at play.

Moreover, it was suggested that the problems chosen for analysis should focus on important recent events which have marked a change. Perhaps one way of looking at this would be to focus in on neo-liberalism in Peru, i.e., to look at the period from the beginning of the nineties, when neo-liberalism first appears, till now. The cases should look at movements which confront neo-liberalism or which emerge as a product of neo-liberalism.