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NOVOS MOVIMENTOS SOCIAIS NO BRASIL: DEBATE

TEÓRICO E COMPARAÇÕES HISTÓRICAS

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NOVOS MOVIMENTOS SOCIAIS NO BRASIL CONTEMPORÂNEO: DEBATE TEÓRICO E COMPARAÇÕES HISTÓRICAS

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RESUMO

New social movements support a process of democratization of Brazilian society and polity, which challenges authoritarian political and cultural traditions and conservative government policies. This paper describes a recent new social movement in Brazil (Part 1), reviews some interpretations about the earlier emergence of new social movements in Europe (Part 2), relates these interpretations to similar movements in Brazil during and after the process of formal democratization (Part 3), and comments on current comparisons between institutional/cultural problems in Brazil and other processes of democratization in the *Mercosur* (especially Uruguay) (Part 4).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Novos movimentos sociais; democratização; América latina; comportamento político.

NOTA SOBRE O AUTOR

Divulgamos aqui um trabalho do professor Paulo Krischke, professor do Doutorado Interdisciplinar em Ciências Humanas sobre movimentos sociais no Brasil contemporâneo, preparado para apresentação recente no Canadá (e que por isso está ainda em inglês) -- onde se fazem algumas alusões ao Movimento Zapatista (México) e à política no Uruguai -- seguido por comentários de Gadea, doutorando do Programa de Pós-graduação em Sociologia Política, preparados a partir de sua condição de estudioso do Zapatismo e historiador uruguaio (e que por isso estão ainda em espanhol). A oportunidade desta divulgação se deve a que os dois autores divergem em alguns pontos, e gostariam de ouvir outras opiniões e perspectivas. Consideramos que esta discussão segue em aberto, e merece a participação de outros interessados no tema.

1. Rediscovering Brazil: “For Another 500th Anniversary” (*“Por Outros 500 Anos”*)

(Presentation of a 20 mts video news coverage of the official government celebration of Brazil’s 500th Anniversary in Porto Seguro, April 22, and of the police repression nearby on the popular opposition demonstration “For Another 500th Anniversary”).

This section of the paper reports on a recent social movement in Brazil, to show how popular social movements coordinate successfully the strategic, identity and politico-cultural dimensions of their actions. (these dimensions will be defined in the next sections of the paper). The following example shows that this coordination can be done by people usually considered very “simple”, illiterate or “pre-modern” (peasants, native peoples, slum dwellers, etc) – and not only by leaders and militants of organized opposition and political groups.

The young man who faced police repression with open arms in the demonstration is Gildo Jorge Roberto, 18 years old, a member of the Terena ethnic group. The images of his action appeared nationwide and worldwide, in the news coverage of the repression on the march against the official celebration of the country’s 500th Anniversary in Porto Seguro, Bahia, April 22. This march was organized by several popular movements under the demand “For Another 500th Anniversary”. Gildo was interviewed later on (April 25) and he told the newspaper that he had travelled more than 2000 miles, from his village in central Brazil, trying to reach Porto Seguro. On April 22 he had marched six miles, with more than 3000 people, representing 140 groups, native, Afro-Brazilians and others, when the military state police attacked them on the road. He said:

“We were prepared to participate in a peaceful demonstration. I carried a poster which said ‘We Want Another 500th Anniversary’. This means we want to rebuild what has been lost. We have already had too much repression, pain, violence.”

Such was the ambitious (utopian?) strategic project of the movement: nothing less than to rebuild what had been lost in 500 years of Brazilian life. And he specified the immediate aim of the demonstration:

“We did not intend to spoil anybody’s party. If we could have only seen the President, that would have been good enough for me. For then he would have known that we were there, present and alive, protesting against neglect.”

The strategic dimension of the demonstration was thus clearly defined, both in the long run and in the short term, as a non-violent action of popular protest, against historical oppression and neglect by government officials.

On the symbolic-identity level, the demonstration revealed a movement defined by a sense of pluralism and respect for difference: it was formed by around 3000 people, representing 140 natives, Afro and other groups, said the newspaper. In a previous report, the newspaper stressed the fact that the “Landless Rural Workers Movement” (MST) had tried to join the demonstration, but was stopped by police barriers on the road. In any case, several other popular groups, such as slum dwellers, church communities, union members, local sections of political parties, etc. joined the march (a handful of priests, one Catholic bishop and one national MP of the Workers’ Party, PT, marched also as “a personal testimony”). The different native peoples and Afro-Brazilian groups marched adorned with their various colors and clothes. Gildon says that *“We were marching happily*

and were singing when hell fell on our heads” (police repression, which he describes below).

Another striking aspect of Gildo’s identity, which also characterizes other social movements, is a sense of ambiguity towards the mass media. Gildo says in the interview that he approached a police officer during the repression, grabbed a walkie-talkie from his belt and threw it away: *“This was a protest, because I wanted to forget the humiliation I had just suffered. Perhaps that radio had recorded everything, and I was ashamed, and started to cry again.”*

Then Gildo was hit by a club on his head, blacked out, and was taken away by his friends. One can understand Gildo’s revolt and shame, in facing a public record of his humiliation. Various students of native cultures have noticed their fear of the power of the media, even of its ability to record the normal events of daily life, because it might reveal their weak spots to strangers, in a debasing and undignified way. Imagine then Gildo’s terrible situation, a young warrior portrayed as falling under repression with his bare hands... However, three days later Gildo agreed to a newspaper interview, and this may be seen as part of his aim of “rebuilding what has been lost”, his self esteem, “For Another 500th Anniversary”.

The politico-cultural dimension of the movement “For Another 500th Anniversary” is a linking thread throughout Gildo’s interview:

“We were marching when the police started to throw bombs at us. I did not know what it was, I did not understand what was happening, for (where I live) I have almost no contact with the city. It was horrible, lots of noise, the women weeping, the children crying, I did not understand anything. I had never before taken a close look at a firearm or a bomb...”

The mutiny squad threw, at random, “moral effect” and teargas grenades, and shot rubber bullets indiscriminately into the crowd; at the end of the day, 150 demonstrators had been arrested, and several others were (luckily not seriously) injured. But in the beginning Gildo had confronted the attackers with his open arms, trying to stop them:

“... ‘Don’t kill my people; we are already so few and you want to finish us’. I knelt before them, begged, cried, shouted. I asked them why were they doing that and they answered ‘we’re just following orders, you have to go back; you’re not going to spoil the celebration’. I insisted, and begged them to kill me. ‘You may kill me but let the native people demonstrate. We’re poor and humble, but we also have rights’ (...) One of them pushed his gun into my chest and I fell to the ground.”

A political culture based on civic rights pervades Gildo’s discourse. It sounds like a textbook case of the civic culture, with its participatory emphasis, and personal commitment to justice, peace and plurality, against government arbitrariness and violence. Gildo is reaffirming his traditional identity as a Terena native, in cooperation with various other identity groups, in a common struggle for “Another 500th Anniversary”—for *“we are poor and humble, but we also have rights”*. Gildo’s “rank-and-file” testimony shows a capable and persuasive coordination among the (apparently fragmentary and diverse) identities and strategic and politico-cultural dimensions of the movement’s action.

This action carefully combines and articulates the modern cultural foundations of Western civilization with traditional (apparently pre-modern) aspects of community life, in a way which some would perhaps call “postmodern”. (A similar combination can be seen in the much more radical example of the current “Zapatista” movement of Chiapas in Mexico; see Yúdice, 1998). Such a combination is not an occasional “bricolage” of

circumstantial elements, a burlesque farse of the official history, as we are used to seeing in the Brazilian carnival . Rather, it is a serious dramatic action, an intelligent, acute and satiric denunciation of the official historic celebration of Brazil's 500th anniversary. In fact, the official celebration was revealed, by this very action, as a political disaster and a tragic parody of Brazilian history, from its beginning up to the present. At the end of the interview, Gildo states:

"I wish the President would reconsider what happened (to us) in Porto Seguro. It looks like the beginning of our history, when the Portuguese and the colonists (Bandeirantes) finished us off". (1)

Thanks to Gildo and to so many others, we are not yet finished.

2. New Movements: Strategies, Identities and Political Culture

There is a large literature on the characteristics of the "new" social movements which appeared in the Western countries in the last three decades of the 20th century. (2) It usually describes their individual peculiarities in typological terms, in contrast to those of the "old" movements, such as the union and neighbourhood organizations. These are valuable studies, but as has also been the case with many other developments in the West, we find that in Latin America many of these contrasts tend to appear enmeshed in specific case studies, overlapping historical times and periods of our own political life.

Therefore, in order to understand "what's new" in the new union and social movements, it is necessary to consider the general historical traits of their initial appearance in the West, instead of dealing only with their individual peculiarities. In this section we shall look at the events of May 1968 in France, which many scholars consider as the first public emergence of so-called "new" social and union movements. We shall see that the studies of these events offer different, and even apparently contradictory interpretations of their general significance. But one may ask whether these interpretations cannot be considered as convergent, and even complementary accounts of the events.

As it is well known, in May 1968 the students of Paris went on strike, built barricades and confronted the police for a whole month on the streets, gathering support from radicalized sectors of the industrial workers and labour unions. They demanded a complete restructuring of the authoritarian rules of university life, and other centralized aspects of French society. One of the first interpretations of the events was proposed by the conservative sociologist and professor Raymond Aron, who considered them as an "elusive revolution"(3) – a reaction of youth to the tightly controlled and centralized characteristics of French society, and to the bureaucratization of the school system. He saw the revolt as a "cathartic farse" or "collective psychodrama", against the arrogance of French intellectuals and bureaucrats, and anticipated the students would soon return to the usual routines of their daily life.

However, Aron also advised the government to beware of the "Trojan Horse" this revolt offered to the Communist and other leftist parties. For, in the context of the Cold War, he saw this threat raised to the establishment, as a possible imitation of the Russian revolution in 1917 -- when leninist revolutionaries took advantage of a massive revolt against authoritarian rule, replacing it with a yet more repressive and centralized regime. Surely, this was a partial and conservative interpretation of the events, from a purely strategic point of view, and one which was widely shared by the French establishment. This

was seen when Pres. Charles De Gaulle finally smashed the revolt with army tanks in the streets, receiving ample support from the electorate and the French public.

Another interpretation of May 1968, literally “from the other side of the barricades”, was that of Cornelius Castoriadis, a Greek emigré and philosophy professor at the University of Paris. He maintained that the revolt was not “cathartic” or momentary, but a real political drama, as the starting point of a crisis of the entire Western civilization. (4) To start with, he saw in the revolt a deep questioning and delegitimization of the representative political system, when it brought to the streets of Paris the demand for direct popular participation, in the processes of political planning and decision making. The revolt was thus seen not only as anti-authoritarian but also as anti-parlamentarian, for the movement rejected from the beginning the mediation of professional politicians, party leaders, and labour unions, university and government officials.

Secondly, for Castoriadis, the revolt was not only maintained by the students and young workers, as specific social groups. It was a social movement held by a *new historic subject*, namely the individual westerner in the search for a lost citizenship, which had to be reconquered. This citizenship had been curtailed by the development of mass society, under the oppression of organized capitalism, the alienation of the cultural industry, and the instrumental rationality of centralized politics.

Therefore, this emergent social subject was individually present in the demonstrations against the *status quo*: students, workers, unemployed, housewives, beggars, and all those excluded and oppressed in French society. Their new identity, whatever their social role or function under the oppression of organized capitalism, was that of a *free subject*, who had raised to replace the working class -- the revolutionary subject of classic Marxism. The aim of this emerging revolution was to rescue the meaning of democratic life and participation, against the totalitarianism of science and rationality, imposed by industrial society and economics through the state institutions. Hence its symbolic expressive orientations, libertarian and anarchic – its red and black flags waved together on the streets, and its graffiti everywhere urging “Be realistic: demand the impossible!”, or “Power to the imagination!”, etc.

This interpretation of the events in Paris emphasized acutely its deep-rooted and widespread meaning, as a crisis of Western civilization and industrial society, against the command of state power and big business. It did not consider the revolt as a struggle for state power, but rather as a long-term and radical search for a new identity and a maximum ambition: the suppression of state politics and industrial capitalism which colonized the lifeworld and the political and social activity of individuals. This interpretation also helped us to understand the meaning of the new social movements which emerged in the following decade, stressing also the crisis of Western civilization – namely, the feminist, ecologist and pacifist groups, which have spread all over the world. These movements have checked, and helped to precipitate, the limits of the welfare state and the balance of military power held during the Cold War.

Nevertheless, one must recognize that Castoriadis’ interpretation of May 68 is also a partial account of those events. For, in spite of its acute perceptions and widespread scope, it mainly emphasizes the crisis of Western civilization as a search for meaning and identity, where the symbolic-expressive dimension appears relatively isolated from other (strategic and politico-cultural) considerations.

A third interpretation of May 68 was offered later on by Agnes Heller, and it considered the events in terms of “civil disobedience”. (5) This definition requires some

specification, for these terms usually describe opposition and resistance within the liberal concept of government. However, Heller emphatically stresses the radical connotations of this and other concepts of political liberalism -- like those of pluralism and tolerance -- in contrast with the usual relativism of liberal theories. Her account of May 68 considers civil disobedience to be a form of action and movement which is mainly ethical, intersubjective and institutional. In fact, she maintains that May 68 was a revolutionary form of action, for it challenged law and public order, established authoritatively in society, economics and government. Not only this, but it also emerged in defence of civil rights and liberties already present in the constitution, which had been both previously disregarded by the authorities and discredited by the citizenry.

She considers that May 68 proves that these rights and liberties should be reassured, exercised and expanded, in the growth and deepening of the democratic regime, both through the expansion and reform of public institutions and the radical-pluralistic acceptance of new forms of life among the citizens. This revolution amounts to a deep change in the political culture of Western societies. For example, she believes that De Gaulle's allies in the conservative governments of France would not have been ousted later on by socialist François Mitterand were it not for the ethical changes in consciousness and the civic actions of the citizenry started in 1968. She also relates the emergence of the new social movements, feminist, ecological and pacifist, as well as a new unionism relatively autonomous from political parties, to this overall transformation of Western political cultures, after the events of Paris 68.

Therefore, Heller points to a participatory change in the political culture, which combines the aims of government reform and popular civic action in daily life. She sees these democratic reforms as questioning the authoritarian logics of both capitalism and industrialism in western society. The logic of democratic participation is therefore considered as diverse and conflictual, *vis à vis* the dominance of industrial capitalism, for it combines elements of the plural forms of daily life, liberated from cultural and political constraints. Thus, this interpretation skilfully integrates the strategic and identity dimensions of the two previous interpretations of May 68, while it also stresses a new dimension of "civic disobedience" as a means of long-term change in the political culture.

Nevertheless, Heller's account may also be seen as a partial theory on new social movements, for it begs the question of how intersubjective changes can be achieved and articulated by groups and individuals. Moreover, she does not specify how such changes may eventually relate to institutional transformation, beyond the exceptional cases of civil disobedience. (6)

These three different interpretations are mentioned here as alternative approaches to the study of new social movements because they emphasize what the analysts consider to be more important in the actions of these movements. But these interpretations were not simply "invented" by the analysts, for each analysis mainly stresses one of the dimensions which was already present in the action (and could eventually become dominant in the outcome). For instance, even Aron's strategic emphasis on a Communist "elusive revolution" in May 1968 was not as far fetched as it may sound with hindsight: the French Communist Party did attempt to control the movement, but with no success. And, in any case, De Gaulle and the majority of public opinion seriously believed in this threat and acted accordingly. Moreover, the movement had its own strategic aims and methods, which sounded unlikely at the time, but proved effective in the long run (for instance: university reform, student participation, factory union representation, etc.) In sum, empowerment of

civil society (instead of assault on state power) was the main strategic threadline, specifically displayed by the movement from its inception.

Surely, the movement's strategic aims and outcomes cannot be appraised in isolation from its identity and other politico-cultural dimensions. This is why it is suggested here that the different approaches mentioned above should be seen as complementary, for they bring to light aspects of social reality that are often interrelated (even when one of these dimensions is, or can become, dominant). But it is necessary to explain at this point that the consideration of those approaches as complementary is neither a proposal to overlook their deep theoretical controversies (for example, their divergent concepts of democracy) nor a relativistic suggestion that everything they say and emphasize is considered to be true. On the contrary, a complementary outlook on the dimensions emphasized by those approaches may reveal both the shortcomings of each approach and whatever is true and valuable in their contributions.

3. New Movements in Contemporary Brazil

It has been suggested elsewhere (7) that new social movements in Brazil, and in Latin America as a whole, articulate their priorities within the identity and strategic and politico-cultural repertory of the processes of democratization – and that the fate of democracy in Latin America will mainly depend on this fact. To put it differently, this means that democratization is a historical process of learning new values, identities and political strategies, that enables groups and individuals to create and sustain a new way of life and new institutions in order to organize this lifeworld. Our own history tells us that this can be done in the midst of outrageous social inequity and authoritarian politico-cultural traditions. For current processes of democratization share everywhere the reflexive and intersubjective character of the present global stage of Western modernity – be it considered “late modernity” or “postmodernity”, as many prefer to call it.

Surely, a process of democratization may be blocked or reversed at any time, by local structural, cultural, psychological and other factors (prejudice, impatience, sectarianism, stupidity, laziness....you name it). But the worldwide success of the new movements such as feminism, ecologism and pacifism testifies about their intersubjective ability to articulate identity and strategic and politico-cultural priorities, in their individual and collective actions, attracting growing alliances and supporters among the public (even when there are very few members within each movement). This ability was tested in Brazil during and after the establishment of formal democratic rights in the new constitutional regime (1988). The new context allowed an expansion of the public sphere, whereby social actors and movements acquired (and developed) new strategies, identities and a ‘civic culture’— albeit incipient and limited by the political transition from authoritarian rule.

This institutional change facilitated the emergence of many new actors, such as the “new unionism” independent of state control (there are now three central union organizations, with different political orientations); various popular neighbourhood confederations in the main cities; the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST), and other diverse groups of workers in the countryside. Certainly, many of these groups began their organization during the previous military regime, and their actions influenced the process of transition to formal democracy. There were others also, that vanished after the transition, or adopted new aims and strategies *vis à vis* both the government and their social allies or adversaries. The convergence and cooperation of these popular groups with

other movements empowers their capacity of intervention in the public arena, to influence the political system and public opinion as a whole.

Jürgen Habermas (8) described this intervention of new social movements, in his theory of “communicative action”, as a capacity to mobilize “criteria of intersubjective validity”, for a process of “decolonization” of the lifeworld from the control of the marketplace and the political system. It is interesting to recall that Habermas was among the critical opponents of the 1968 student movement, denouncing its ephemeral traits when it first emerged in Germany -- though he already recognized then its novelty and anti-systemic potential. (9) In his later work, he further elaborated on the positive aspects of the new movements, distinguishing between those described as “offensive” (for example, feminism, and the US civil rights movement in its early stages) and the “defensive” ones (i.e, the youth and alternative movements) “*whose common focus is a critique of (economic) growth, centered on the themes of peace and ecology*”. (10)

His main point is that communicative actions of new social movements rely on criteria of intersubjective validity, which coordinate strategic, symbolic and politico-cultural (“normative”, he says) interactions. Such interactions may transform the public sphere, for they emerge from capabilities already present in a “rationalized” lifeworld, struggling “*for the fulfilment of promises anchored and long recognized by the universalistic foundations of law and morality*”. (11) This appeal to intersubjective criteria is easy to understand, in reference to day-to-day and face-to-face interactions: it constitutes the basis of dialogue routines everywhere. However, it becomes crucial to democratization processes when they refer to the fulfilment of universalistic ethic and rational contents already present in public law and morality. As he states in his more recent work on Law and Democracy:

(There is) “*...a ‘dual politics’ in ‘new’ social movements, that pursues simultaneously both ‘offensive’ and ‘defensive’ aims. Through their (universalistic) offensive actions they advance themes which are relevant to society as a whole – i.e., defining the main issues, contributing to problem-solving, adding information, interpreting values differently, mobilizing good arguments, denouncing bad arguments, -- in order to support a consensual atmosphere, capable of modifying the legal parameters for the formation of a political will to exert pressure on parliament, governments and courts in favor of certain policies. On the other hand, they try to preserve ‘defensively’ certain structures of the public and associational spheres – producing subcultural public counter-spheres and counter-institutions, strengthening collective identities, and achieving new groundwork – through a reform of the institutions and an expansion of their rights.*” (12)

This is a process we have been studying in Brazil and elsewhere. And the studies are showing that the new movements are facing hard challenges and obstacles, on both sides of their “dual politics”. On the one hand, they face strong opponents against their universalistic “offensive” actions towards intellectual, political and business elites, the party system, and also the overwhelming institutional inertia of government bureaucracy. On the other hand, they face “defensive” divisions within their own ranks, competition among ego-centered leaderships, uncertainty about their identities (past, present and future), and deep-seated traditions of self-debasement and prejudice. Such obstacles are compounded by the effective “divide and conquer” policies of both national and international neoliberal forces, which almost entirely control the media, the marketplace and the government.

These obstacles are so great that one wonders how new movements can even emerge at all. But they are there nonetheless, and tend to become ever more important and

widespread with the unfolding of the process of democratization. We shall now look more closely at some of these obstacles in Brazil, in reference to similar processes of democratization in Latin America.

4. Institutional democratization and political culture

Brazil is going through a process of democratization that remains unfinished, for here the “incomplete tasks of modernity” are paramount. Both the legacy of Western modernity and the current influence of so-called “postmodernity” arrived in this country by biased and discriminatory means. (13) One of the results is that Brazil’s economy is 11th in size, but its income distribution is among the most unfair in the world. This is a society which may be called “hierarchical”, in comparison with Western liberal societies, to follow the categories proposed by John Rawls. (14) Rawls maintains that hierarchical societies do not uphold the liberal doctrines of individualism, and therefore do not consider most of their nationals as citizens -- i.e., as “free and equal moral persons”. But hierarchical societies may be considered “well ordered societies” — and as such accepted by the Western world – as far as they respect the human rights of their members, represented by groups, movements and institutions organized through a “decent hierarchical consultation”, based on a religious worldview and/or other forms of tradition such as natural law.

For instance, a study has maintained that the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) can be seen as a democratizing force within a hierarchical society, both for its joint appeal to formal constitutional rights and natural law on the one hand, and for its challenges to landowners and government through a “decent hierarchical consultation” - within the movement itself and *vis à vis* the party system and state agencies -- on the other hand. (15) The success of this movement in the politico-cultural dimension is shown by the support it has received so far from public opinion (national and international), despite the enormous obstacles it faces in confronting the ruling elites.

Its strategic aim of land occupation for farm production has skilfully attracted alliances with other movements, NGOs, and opposition political parties – while simultaneously maintaining its independence as an autonomous movement. Moreover, the identity of its members, as peasants or rural workers, has expanded throughout the process, to include a sense of self-reliance, civic courage and cooperation in daily life, as well as a recognition of the right to difference, in constant dialogue with other sectors of society. (16) Certainly, all these conquests may be suppressed or reversed in the future, but they show that a popular movement can raise and achieve progress for its cause, despite the enormous obstacles it faces, in a society with undemocratic traditions.

Various similar examples of popular movements in Brazil exist. Thus, it is necessary to recognize that many contemporary Brazilian movements are “new” movements, distinguished from the “old” ones, which only defended particularist corporate interests and/or a traditional worldview – such as the “anti-modern” peasant movements from the early 1900s, or even the “old unionism” controlled by the state since the 1930s. However, it is important to note that many of the new movements still maintain, but with a different meaning, certain communitary emphases of the old ones. For instance, it has been argued -- since the 1988 constitution formally established civil and political rights — that the “grassrootism” prevailing among many popular movements (i.e., their refusal to occupy positions in the political arena, or even to interact with formal politics) is no longer a

traditional anti-authoritarian defence mechanism. It may be seen rather as the beginning of a difficult process of social democratization of the lifeworld, similar to others that previously took place in countries which earlier established a fuller democratic regime, and a participatory political culture. (17)

This is why it is so important to compare the Brazilian process of democratization to similar processes in the Southern Cone countries. For this helps us to understand the enormous challenges faced by new union and social movements in Brazil, connected with the heavy load of tradition in Brazilian political culture and institutions. Thus, the mainline of studies on Latin American democratization, named “regime analysis” (18), posits Brazil as an extreme case of “party underdevelopment”. (19) Brazilian political parties are weak and unstable, with scarce roots within society, and their political representatives enjoy complete autonomy *vis à vis* their constituency, which facilitates an extremely high interparty mobility. For this very reason, parties and politicians suffer from a vast deficit of credibility among the electorate, who show the highest degree of apathy and scepticism in Latin America.

Other studies have stressed some important changes in the last decade, in Brazil and Uruguay (and to some extent also in Argentina), resulting in the electoral growth of leftist and opposition parties. For instance, Constanza Moreira argued that Brazil and Uruguay “*are the only Latin American countries that have relatively autonomous and active labour unions, having organic links with leftist parties*”. (20) In both countries the Left has consolidated an electoral basis, even to the point of arriving at national presidential elections as the second electoral force. And not by chance “*both countries experience a similar legacy from the previous authoritarian regimes: the introduction of ‘liberalizing’ economic models which continue up to this day*”. (21)

Moreira’s study argues that this growth of the opposition is part of a “third wave” of the Left: “*The post-dictatorship Latin American left, with distinctive characteristics: it emerged and spread after the end of the Cold War, in opposition to the neoliberal influence of the ‘Washington Consensus’; it is state-orienting, Keynesian, and it favours social movements and Social Democracy, and has a strong appeal among social movements.*” (22) The study recognizes differences between the Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT) and the Uruguayan “*Frente Amplia*”, but insists on the similarities, which challenge the established political order:

“*a) In both countries the consolidation of an autonomous labor union movement was decisive for the emergence of a leftist political party able to overcome its origins, as a small ‘ideological’ party, to the point of becoming a ‘massive’ popular party; b) these processes occurred after the crisis of industrial developmentalism, influenced by the Latin American movements of the 1960s, ‘Terceiristas’, etc. This accounts for their pacifism, their trying to gain access to power through elections, and their engendering of a specific political culture (egalitarian, grassrootist, state-orienting, and movement-appealing) disinterested in the traditional monopoly of political representation; c) in both cases, an alliance between the support of the unions and that of the middle classes seems to determine the chances of electoral victory for the Left.*”(23)

Most certainly, the growth of the Left in Brazil and Uruguay are important processes that bear some similarities. However, the differences are perhaps much greater than Moreira’s study seems to recognize. For instance: Uruguayan mainstream parties are very stable, and were formed in the 19th century; Uruguay’s political system established liberal institutions in the early 20th century, as well as a welfare system considered for long

to be the most successful in Latin America. One of the results of this democratic tradition is that income distribution is one of the most equitable in the region, in spite of the fact that most of the electorate considers it now to be unjust, with immediate consequences in the political arena. We have seen above that Brazilian institutions and traditions are at the opposite pole of this liberal historical legacy.

Moreover, as long as the Brazilian PT continues to remain strongly linked to social and union movements, it will probably continue to suffer from a certain “schizophrenia” between political and social action (contrary to what happens in Uruguay). One example is *“the gap which often occurs between union and parliamentary struggles, or between the struggles of the popular movements and the need for the party to formulate a clear cluster of proposals, to be presented within and outside the Parliament, to induce government to solve those problems.”* (24) A recent example of this gap was the PT’s lack of success in mediating between the government and the movement “For Another 500th Anniversary”, last April in Porto Seguro. Newspapers reported that PT national leader José Dirceu met with the leadership of the movement, on the eve of the demonstration, trying to convince them to open negotiations with the government, but that he was not successful (which apparently justified police repression of the demonstration). Another important difference is that in Brazil there are three Central Union organizations, whereas in Uruguay there is only one, closely related to the *Frente Amplia*. The Brazilian union organizations may eventually oppose jointly certain government policies, but they have different political orientations and only one is in line with the PT.

Notwithstanding the many contrasts between Brazil and Uruguay, it is certain that their leftist parties have similar electoral profiles: they recruit their constituencies from among the youthful, better-educated, urban voters who live in the large cities, and among organized workers. Research indicates that party identification is higher among these constituencies than in the electorate at large. Thus, Moreira’s study explains party growth of the Left in Brazil and Uruguay (and to some extent also the growth of the Radicals in Argentina) as a phenomenon opposed to current regional integration through neoliberal policies. Also, it emphasizes at the end some of the crossroads faced by the Left, as it becomes the main alternative to the *status quo* in Brazil and Uruguay:

“They lost the 1998 Presidential elections, but increased their representation in parliament; they conquered new ground at municipal level, and started the new century with two decisive challenges: a) to conquer votes in the countryside, in less modernized, less urbanized, and especially in less politicized towns; b) to create an alternative programme of government, not only to continue to mobilize discontent against current processes of economic reform, but also to achieve a higher consciousness about the risks of opposition to a model of development each day less ‘domestically controllable’.” (25)

These challenges could eventually be met by the Left (or opposition) parties in the Southern Cone (though De la Rúa’s Radical government in Argentina is showing that these are no easy tasks...). In fact, even if the opposition parties achieve a successful government programme, alternative to current neoliberal domination, it is to be seen how the electorate will react to such changes.

Our present studies on changes of political cultures in the *Mercosur* countries indicate that there is a great heterogeneity within each country, even among the younger cohorts of the electorate – supposed to be the main supporters of alternative political programmes. Previous research on the NAFTA and European countries has stressed an emergent “postmaterialist” (and even “postmodern”) trend (perhaps related to an ecological

“culture of sustainability”) among the younger cohorts of the electorate, whose growth in the last decades facilitated successful processes of regional integration.(26) Our present studies of the Southern Cone suggest that this theory should be revised, or at least adapted to a large extent, in order to face the greater heterogeneity of our countries.

In Latin American countries, generational change is a controversial topic, due to internal socioeconomic heterogeneity, the extreme diversity in the capabilities for political integration of each country, and the heavy load of nationalist and/or authoritarian traditions in the political culture of some countries. (27) For instance, Paraguay has been described as a case of “democratization without modernization”, due to still prevailing traditions of *caudillismo* and rent-seeking economics. In Argentina, there is a minority ecological subculture, whose relations to “postmaterialism” could not be established – for its origins may be a long-lasting tradition of “*higienismo*” and urbanized “*civilization*” in that country.

We have noted above the sharp contrasts between Brazil and Uruguay, in spite of the common electoral growth of the Left. This political trend has been supported by many ecologists, but the State-orienting tendencies of the Left’s constituency raise doubts (to say the least) about the relevance of “postmaterialism” to either parties or movements. The main thrust of this research is now to study the diverse historical contexts of socialization, in which the generational cohorts of every country have been brought up, in order to understand these local and generational diversities in the political cultures, and their prospects for the future.

These findings provide a warning for us to be cautious about the trend to overgeneralization, and undue homogenisation, of current theories and proposals of regional integration and modernization – which, as always happened in the past, come from the advanced Western countries to Latin America. Certainly, there is nothing intrinsically wrong in this Western origin, except for our past Latin American experiences of colonialism, with its enduring legacy of economic dependence and political arrogance. This is why we have made abundant use of other Western intellectual sources in this paper, which help us to be more modest and self-conscious, in our appraisals of Latin American cultural and institutional life.

However, this is not to say that current dominant projects of neoliberal (or other forms of imported) integration could not succeed in the long run in Latin America. But in order to succeed, they would have to take root in each country in a manner that would certainly be different, from case to case. And, in many cases, such success might be very costly, both to winners and to opposition. For the young people in a number of these countries – both the younger cohorts of the electorate, and those who organize in new labour and social movements — seem to be the most vocal against current dominant policies, as well as the least integrated in the political establishment. (28) Thus, the immediate future may include scenarios of growing political confrontation, if Latin American social, economic and cultural heterogeneities, among the younger sectors of the population, do not find (real and authentic) political alternatives of national and regional integration.

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COMENTARIOS

Krischke primeiro solicitou comentários de Gadea, porque o trabalho para o Canadá mencionava (muito tangencialmente) o movimento neo-zapatista como exemplo inovador de atuação combinada sobre aspectos da modernidade, da pré-modernidade e da chamada pós-modernidade. E também porque o trabalho (mais substantivamente) comparava a eficiente institucionalização da democracia no Uruguai com as deficiências do mesmo processo no Brasil, onde os movimentos sociais tendem a isolar-se da política partidária. Gadea discorre sobre esses temas dizendo que:

La tradición política y estabilidad institucional del Uruguay no puede ocultar ciertos problemas visualizados con la “apertura democrática” del año 1985, problemas que justamente van a surgir desde la propia lógica institucional y política uruguaya. Observemos, por ejemplo, como con los vientos democráticos de los años 1985-1989 aparecieron una serie de movimientos políticos y culturales (juveniles, de derechos humanos, barriales, comunitarios) con cierta autonomía hacia el sistema político, pero la falta de imaginación y una práctica política que sólo parece admitirse a través de los canales institucionales de expresión, llevaron a su total desaparición o a una “perversa” absorción por parte de los partidos de izquierda. Así, los primeros problemas y “desencantos” con el proceso de democratización se refieren a la *incapacidad y los intereses prácticos de un sistema político que no encontró nada mejor que tratar de acomodar la “nueva situación social” en la antigua normatividad e institucionalidad política, en lugar de intentar generar una nueva normatividad para la nueva situación real de poder, heredera de la descomposición progresiva de la cultura política producida bajo el llamado “Estado benefactor”*.

La señal más aguda de ésto fue la propia campaña de represión policial del gobierno del presidente Sanguinetti (1985-1989), que a través de “razzias”, detenciones ilegales y un supuesto discurso de combate al consumo de drogas, generó en la población joven un fuerte desencanto. Por esto, el clima político no fue de una total “apertura”, como inclusive muchos pretenden dejar de manifiesto. La “llegada de la democracia” trajo consigo una *reconfiguración política que procuró reafirmar las estructuras políticas tradicionales, las estructuras partidarias y alineamientos políticos de la pre-dictadura militar*. Todo aquello que no lograba encuadrarse en tal lógica era simplemente combatido o, en el mejor de los casos, reformulado dentro de una fuerza política que hasta el momento también era crítica a esta lógica: el Frente Amplio, la “izquierda política”.

El Estado y el sistema político uruguayo, coherente con su historia “estable”, parten de un principio de regulación en el que sólo tienen derechos representativos aquellos representantes elegidos a través de las elecciones nacionales, lo que consecuentemente genera que todos los intereses sociales se definen como grupos de presión clientelizables y deslegitimados a no ser que se sometan a la “mediación” del partido político o el gobierno. De todas maneras, ésto no es lo que puede ser considerado de mayor importancia, sino el hecho de que esta *performance política* se encuentra ampliamente incorporada en las prácticas del “mundo de la vida cotidiana” de los uruguayos.

El proceso de democratización o la denominada “apertura democrática” termina en el año 1989, año del plebiscito para derogar la “Ley de Caducidad de la pretención punitiva del Estado” (ley que permite amnistiar a militares y policías vinculados con los actos de violación a los derechos humanos durante el período del gobierno militar, 1973-1985). Dicho acontecimiento marcó la finalización de una etapa política agitada y dio inicio a una nueva “bipolaridad política”, una división constante que puede percibirse hasta el día de hoy. Así quedó demostrado en las últimas elecciones nacionales (octubre de 1999), que llevó al Frente Amplio tener que confrontarse con una “coalición política” de los partidos tradicionales (históricamente opuestos), el Partido Colorado y el Partido Blanco o Nacional.

La división que marcó aquél plebiscito se estableció desde opiniones confrontadas en relación al tema de la “violación a los derechos humanos” y a la “estabilidad democrática” del país, es decir, entre quienes querían derogar la “ley de caducidad” y someter a juicio a militares y policías de la dictadura militar, y entre los que sostenían que por la propia salud de la débil democracia debía ponerse un punto final al tema y mantener dicha ley. El “voto verde” (por el color de la hoja de votación) era simbolizado con los primeros y el “voto amarillo” para los que apelaban a la historia institucional “estable” del país. Finalmente, el “voto amarillo” es mayoritario y, como por métodos mágicos, el debate entorno a las características que debía tener la “re-emergente democracia” llega a su fin. La efervescencia social generada con la movilización en pro del “voto verde” fue desapareciendo, las fuerzas sindicales quedaron debilitadas, la izquierda política recibe una dura derrota y muchos jóvenes se desencantan con el propio proceso de democratización. Así, el escenario político tradicional fue adquiriendo mayor solidez, no significando otra cosa que la efectiva consolidación de una tensa “coalición política” representada por blancos y colorados.

Este clima político vino a consolidar a comienzos de los años `90 una creciente indiferencia política y una crisis de la militancia tradicional de la izquierda. Pocos acontecimientos lograban generar pequeños gestos de participación política, al mismo tiempo que el nuevo presidente Lacalle (1990-1994) da inicio a las llamadas políticas neoliberales. Mientras tanto, el Frente Amplio gana en Montevideo y se ubica por primera vez en el gobierno de la Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo, bajo el liderazgo del médico Tabaré Vazquez. Un clima de fiesta invadió a antiguos y nuevos adeptos a dicha fuerza política, que ya lleva una década en el gobierno de Montevideo (actualmente en el cargo el arquitecto Mariano Arana) y goza de una amplia legitimidad.

Es cierto que la izquierda política uruguaya simbolizada en el Frente Amplio se ha transformado a fines de los años `90 en la fuerza mayoritaria del país, apelando a que nuevamente los “partidos tradicionales” se unieran para lograr derrotarla. Pero esta es una izquierda distinta, una fuerza política que ya ha abandonado “viejos slogans” y soluciones de confrontación directa con las “agencias del capitalismo mundial”, como el FMI y el BID, para pasar a proponer políticas que plantean insertar al pequeño y débil país de la mejor manera posible en el nuevo contexto global. Esto la hace una alternativa prácticamente “única” para la mayoría de los ciudadanos uruguayos, bastante cansados de todo lo que esté teñido con lo estrictamente político. Quiero decir que *la propia indiferencia política y el deseo por reducir la rigidez de la burocracia y la institucionalidad históricamente consolidada son los factores que permiten ese crecimiento*

tan rápido del Frente Amplio, la identificación de la gente por interpretarse como la “alternativa menos mala” frente a los otros partidos políticos. Nada de conciencia política, de militancia en crecimiento, de jóvenes politizados, de dirigentes más legítimos para representar a la población. El Frente Amplio forma parte de ese clima político “desencantado” que hoy representa el desafío más prometedor para la perversa lógica política-institucional del país. El Frente Amplio, como fuerza política, es un claro “espacio de transición” en el sentido de “agendar” una cultura política diferente, en el cual los mecanismos de expresión política y cultural dejan de ser instrumentados y canalizados por los aparatos institucionales y las prácticas políticas tradicionales.-

E mais ainda: refuta-se a possibilidade de distinguir (como Krischke propõe) a dimensão estratégica da ação dos movimentos sociais de sua dimensão identitária, porque:

¿Bajo qué criterios es posible separar en las acciones colectivas sus componentes estratégicos y tácticos del conjunto de elementos simbólico-expresivos que se conjugan, en la lucha concreta, para dar cohesión al grupo y dar sentido a la experiencia de los participantes?. Un movimiento social se caracteriza por su capacidad de llevar adelante una lucha en torno a cuestiones fundamentales de manera tal que la acción estratégica sea compatible con la dimensión identitaria, por lo que ambos paradigmas confluyen en el concepto de *redes sociales*, privilegiándose, por un lado, su funcionamiento como "mallas" de contacto entre organizaciones (por las que se presentan recursos materiales y humanos, conocimientos, experiencias) y, por el otro, se reconoce sólo su virtual poder cultural en vista de la formación de identidades colectivas y refugios de tradiciones y experiencias sociales alternativas. Así, ambos momentos, el *estratégico* y el *identitario*, se encuentran entrelazados y presentes en el momento de pretender explicar el surgimiento y accionar de los diversos movimientos sociales actuales.

Sobre este último ponto Krischke apenas insiste aqui que essa distinção é unicamente analítica, e segue a proposta de Habermas, de que o processo de ação comunicativa coordena ações normativas, estratégicas e expressivas (identitárias). Contudo, essa discussão segue em aberto, inclusive para a participação de outros colegas. Mas, finalmente, Gadea gostaria aprofundar sobre esta suposta resolução do estratégico com o identitário, já que:

puede ser observada a partir del análisis del actual movimiento neo-zapatista de Chiapas, surgido a luz pública en el sureste mexicano el 1 de enero de 1994 bajo una formación político-militar denominada Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN). Efectivamente, el neo-zapatismo adquiere visibilidad mediante una marcada *flexibilidad y fluidez estructural*, mediante su carácter *pragmático* en su lógica de acción política. Esto significa asumir el entrelazamiento continuo de las diferentes estrategias desarrolladas y sus consecuentes reformulaciones identitarias, lo que supone afirmar que de acuerdo con una “lógica situacional específica” existe una estrategia e identidad particular.

El movimiento neo-zapatista tiene sus orígenes en la formación político-militar surgida en las montañas y la Selva Lacandona, en el estado mexicano de Chiapas, el 15 de noviembre de 1983. En esta fecha, no más de 12 hombres (principalmente profesionales del medio

urbano) ingresan en la selva y deciden organizar una fuerza militar sobre las mismas inquietudes políticas e ideológicas de las izquierdas latinoamericanas de estos años. Instaurar el socialismo y derrocar al Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI), que por más de 70 años se lograba legitimar en el poder gracias al fraude electoral y a su política clientelista, eran las principales ideas norteadoras de este minúsculo grupo “guerrillero”.

Durante los años 1984 y 1985 el contacto con las primeras comunidades indígenas de la región se transforma en un hecho fundamental. Los pocos “guerrilleros” que aún quedaban establecieron una especie de pacto con las primeras comunidades contactadas, o mejor dicho, con los líderes indígenas de las organizaciones campesinas actuantes en la zona (muy vinculados con la acción de grupos políticos de izquierda, principalmente maoístas, y con la tradición cultural y organizacional de religiosos de la “teología de la liberación”). A cambio de facilitar alimentos y los elementos necesarios para sobrevivir en la selva, los “guerrilleros” comenzaron a entrenar militarmente a los más jóvenes de estas comunidades con el fin de hacer frente a la creciente represión de las “guardias blancas” (grupo armado al servicio de los hacendados) y grupos de paramilitares. No obstante, mientras este tímido contacto continuaba produciéndose, a comienzos de los años 90 un fuerte proceso de “masificación” del EZLN (con más jóvenes indígenas de la región) comenzaba a diseñar una característica diferente: de ser una organización “guerrillera” se transforma en un movimiento “comunitario armado”. Cada vez más lo que se conocía como EZLN fue derivando en la confluencia de componentes “guerrilleros” e indígenas en el aspecto organizacional y militar, existiendo una vinculación muy estrecha entre aquellos y las comunidades indígenas a las que se encontraban vinculados geográfica y socialmente, las denominadas “bases de apoyo”. Por ésto, es oportuno entender que *el EZLN no es estrictamente el movimiento neo-zapatista, sino un elemento de él.*

Mientras estos cambios se producían, los aspectos ideológicos y políticos del neo-zapatismo también comienzan a presenciar considerables transformaciones. Ya en el año 1994, cuando el mundo recibió por los medios la imagen de indígenas precariamente armados en el sur de México (ocupando cuatro municipios importantes de Chiapas), el movimiento era el producto de un verdadero “coctel identitario”, donde el imaginario político y cultural de los “guerrilleros urbanos” (aunque ya con más de 10 años conviviendo en la selva), de las comunidades indígenas y de los catequistas y religiosos vinculados a la “Teología de la Liberación” (muy presentes en las comunidades desde los años 50) dejaba al descubierto el accionar de un sujeto colectivo realmente “híbrido”. Así, los discursos iban desde la acusación política, la reivindicación por democracia, por mejoras económicas y sociales para las comunidades indígenas, hasta la necesidad de establecer un “nuevo pacto” con el Estado en función de garantizar a los indígenas la autodeterminación cultural y jurídica, la integración a la nación mexicana a partir de un efectivo reconocimiento de la diferencia cultural.

De todas maneras, hasta el año 1995, los rebeldes neo-zapatistas se convirtieron en un actor social que promovía un gran “movimiento civil ciudadano”, reorientando su acción en los espacios estrictamente políticos, desafiando la institucionalidad política y “democrática” perversa existente en el país y actuando, visiblemente, como un “puente” entre la llamada sociedad civil y el poder político. Como movimiento que encarnaba ideales modernizadores, el neo-zapatismo intentaba generar espacios sociales de debate y actuación

política, hasta que en febrero de 1995, el avance del ejército federal mexicano sobre los territorios en que se hacía presente provoca un repliegue estratégico y la huída inmediata. A pocos kilómetros, los indígenas rebeldes se ubicaban en “La Realidad”, localidad donde el movimiento reconstruiría sus fuerzas. Desde entonces, el neo-zapatismo comenzaba a mostrar características poco previsibles. A pesar de su confinamiento geográfico, del aparente aislamiento, del cerco militar y presiones constantes del gobierno, entra en contacto con ONGs mexicanas y extranjeras, desencadena un movimiento mundial en contra de la política militarista oficial, promueve eventos sociales a escala internacional y, de forma fundamental, adquiere un rostro indígena más definido, planteándose una nueva “reconstrucción de su identidad”.

De esta manera, el carácter “comunitario” se afianza como paradigma organizacional típico del movimiento neo-zapatista. Esta especie de “retorno” hacia los espacios comunitarios no es más que la consolidación de una “comunidad de resistencia” en cuya identidad se encuentra el rostro indígena, el desafío étnico-comunitario a un Estado y una lógica política institucional que tiene limitaciones administrativas, jurídicas y fundamentalmente culturales para legitimar un Estado pluricultural, reconociendo definitivamente el carácter diverso de la realidad social y política mexicana. A partir de asumir esta identidad, la estrategia del neo-zapatismo se centra mucho más en desarrollar una serie de contactos con actores sociales y organizaciones extranjeras, promoviendo un gran movimiento internacional en contra de lo que se interpreta como “neoliberalismo”. Es decir, que de haber iniciado una actuación política estrictamente desarrollada a nivel nacional, ahora el espacio internacional gana en prioridad frente a las dificultades existentes en contextos políticos nacionales adversos.

Los años 1997, 1998 y 1999 son de fuerte reafirmación interna comunitaria, donde el discurso modernizador cede lugar a un discurso en el cual la diversidad cultural y el carácter indígena de las demandas se entrelazan con una perspectiva emancipatoria más “global”, imposible de ser reducida a los aspectos nacionales. Esto se relaciona a la conformación de una *comunidad de resistencia global* en torno del neo-zapatismo, que toma forma y se estructura a partir de una amplia *red mundial de actores en solidaridad protagónica*, materializada en eventos como el “Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y contra el Neoliberalismo” (julio-agosto de 1996). De esta forma, se observa una característica interesante que comienza a determinar al neo-zapatismo: la conformación de una *red de comunidades identitarias diversas*, en aparente contradicción con los hasta ahora “eventos” o “reuniones” ensayados por los distintos sectores o actores sociales del planeta, es decir, eventos donde se reúnen entre sí las feministas, los indígenas, los ambientalistas, etc. Esto es lo que dio el carácter “multicultural” al Encuentro, la pluralidad de experiencias que comparten una misma inquietud “existencial”, la *posibilidad de afirmaciones identitarias*. Este acontecimiento, organizado por el neo-zapatismo, le permitió *enfaticar al movimiento la identidad indígena dentro de la diversidad de identidades excluidas por las Modernidad(es)-global(es)* y, al mismo tiempo, *incorporar una diversidad de experiencias concretas y "mundos de vida" traídos por los invitados extranjeros a su propia estrategia e identidad*, enriqueciendo considerablemente la “visión pluralista” que el movimiento ya poseía.

Al mismo tiempo, y de manera determinante, a esta “comunidad multicultural” originada desde el contacto con individuos y grupos diversos de todo el mundo se le suma la producción *real* en el *espacio virtual* de Internet de una *comunidad virtual de resistencia*. La *horizontalidad* de la comunicación propiciada por el ciberespacio ha situado al movimiento neo-zapatista como una “comunidad identitaria más” en circulación. Puede que continúe representando un marco referencial importante, pero ya ha dejado de ser “el referente” *emancipatorio* de las conexiones virtuales de *comunidades de resistencia*. Es así como el neo-zapatismo se amplía, es decir, se disuelve, cae en la trampa fatal de su propia estrategia: lo que es posible denominar como *(post)neo-zapatismo*.

No obstante, el año 2000 sorprende a los rebeldes dejándolos con un silencio prolongado. Nada apareció en la página de internet del movimiento desde que el Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), en las pasadas elecciones nacionales del mes de julio, derrotó al PRI. Setenta años de hegemonía política parecen quedar atrás para cuando a fin de año el presidente electo, Vicente Fox, asuma los destinos del país, los mismos setenta años que se presentan como imágenes confusas para los rebeldes neo-zapatistas que, aislados en la selva, no han podido o querido emitir ningún comentario. Quien sabe si el silencio inquietante del Subcomandante Marcos no representa una nueva estrategia política del movimiento, esperando el momento a que el nuevo presidente asuma y, entonces, reiniciar el diálogo que el anterior gobierno suspendió en el año 1996. O tal vez, tal silencio se relaciona a lo que parece ser un fuerte golpe para los neo-zapatistas: la supuesta captura del Subcomandante Marcos por parte de algunos desertores del EZLN. Más allá de todo, si una nueva estrategia puede dar inicio luego de tales episodios, ésta tiene que ver con una recuperación de la dimensión nacional como escenario político de acción, recolocando en este contexto las demandas por “autodeterminación” y “autonomía” de momentos anteriores. De esta forma, el carácter identitario va a expresarse desde la recuperación del carácter “ciudadano” y “nacional” del movimiento, dejando un tanto en suspenso el carácter étnico-cultural asumido desde algunos años.

Así, el año 2001 se presentará como un verdadero desafío para los rebeldes indígenas de Chiapas, y no sólo porque será el momento en el cual pueden volver a ser escuchados por un gobierno que ya ha prometido dar solución al conflicto, sino porque en el movimiento neo-zapatista se encuentra uno de los principales protagonistas de la deslegitimación y el fracaso político del poder consolidado históricamente en el PRI. Tal vez el silencio no sea otra cosa que un síntoma de descanso luego de más de 5 años de resistencia política y complicados posicionamientos estratégicos. Hoy, los rebeldes indígenas, que continúan aislados y viviendo en la más absoluta precariedad, saben de lo que han contribuido para que los mexicanos festejen la ruptura con un orden político perverso de 70 años. Es la hora de que la sociedad mexicana y el sistema político reconozca tal innegable sacrificio de los más desposeídos, de los que hasta hace poco le negaban hasta su nacionalidad mexicana, los indígenas herederos de la cultura maya, cultura de los mejores astrónomos del planeta del siglo XV.-