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Meanings of Citizenship in Latin America

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Summary

This paper introduces the Latin American debate on citizenship. It examines, first, the general conditions of the emergence of the notion in different countries of the continent. Secondly, it discusses what can be seen as general features assumed by the redefinition of citizenship that underlay its emergence in Latin America, linked to the democratising processes in the last decades. This analysis takes as its main reference the pioneering process of redefinition that took place in Brazil, because it is considered the most elaborate one and has been, to some extent, a reference for other countries in Latin America and elsewhere. Third, in trying to avoid the risks of excessive generalisation, it discusses the different nuances and emphasises the notion of citizenship has taken up, as they may not only provide a further understanding of the debate but also highlight the distinctions and specificities of citizenship in different countries. Finally, it focuses on the neoliberal versions of citizenship and the dilemmas these pose to the original democratising meanings and uses of citizenship in Latin America.

Keywords: citizenship, Latin America, democratisation, neoliberal citizenship.

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1 Introduction

In the last two decades, the notion of citizenship has become increasingly important in the political vocabulary of Latin America as well as of other parts of the world. In Latin America, its emergence has been linked to processes of democratisation that took place since the 1980s, especially in those countries with authoritarian regimes. In Latin America, the connection between citizenship and struggles for democracy however, has not been perceived as based merely on the obvious egalitarian implications embodied in the classical version of citizenship. Citizenship became a prominent notion in the last decades because it has also been recognised as a crucial weapon not only in the struggle against social and economic exclusion and inequality, but – most importantly – in the widening of dominant conceptions of politics itself. Thus, the redefinition of citizenship undertaken mainly by social movements and other sectors of civil society in Latin America intended, in the first place, to confront the existing boundaries of what is defined as the political arena: its participants, its institutions, its processes, its agenda and its scope (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998). The broadening of the definition of politics in order to acknowledge new subjects, themes, spaces and institutions has been a crucial step towards the re-establishment of democracy in authoritarian countries. More broadly, it has been an essential step towards the ‘democratisation of democracy’ or its deepening.

The appropriation of citizenship in order to achieve these two goals implied a redefinition of liberal versions of citizenship, paradigmatically described by Marshall (1950) in the 1940s. The liberal version of citizenship had been dominant until social movements began to appropriate it. Such a redefinition had to begin by asserting the historical character of the meanings and contents of citizenship and, therefore, the need to adjust them to concrete realities and specific political projects and intentions. The consolidation of citizenship as a strategy (Wiener 1992) or a project (Dagnino 1998) combines both the ‘fluid and changing character of its meanings’ (Menéndez Carrión 2003) and their intentional appropriation and redefinition. Furthermore, and as a consequence, citizenship presents itself as a ‘multi-layered concept’ (Wappenstein 2004), where different dimensions and emphases combine in different configurations, according to different national historical contexts.

The redefinition of citizenship in Latin America has been the product of both social and political actors, and academics. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that the academic or analytical debate on citizenship is heavily marked by a close relationship with the political debate. Political struggle not only has an impact on analytical visions of citizenship, but also on political actors, such as social movements and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), political parties and even government sectors, which have incorporated these different visions in different ways. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in Latin America, a significant number of intellectuals working on this issue engage in politics and often have well-known political or party affiliations.

A substantial part of the attraction of citizenship to these actors – and of its core category of rights – was the double role it has been able to play in the debate among the different conceptions of democracy that characterise contemporary political struggle in Latin American countries. On the one hand, struggles

organised around the recognition and extension of rights contributed towards making the extension and deepening of democracy much more concrete. On the other hand, the reference to citizenship often provided a common ground – and a connecting principle – for an immense diversity of social movements that found in the language of rights a way of expressing their claims, helping them to escape fragmentation and isolation. Thus the building of citizenship was seen at the same time as a general struggle – for the broadening of democracy – which was able to incorporate a plurality of demands, and as a set of specific struggles for substantive rights (housing, education, health, etc) whose success would deepen democracy in society.

As a result of its growing influence, the notion of citizenship soon became an object of dispute. In the last decade it has been appropriated and re-signified by dominant sectors and the state to include a variety of meanings. Hence, as a part of the neoliberal agenda of reform, citizenship began to be understood and promoted as mere individual integration to the market. At the same time and as part of the same process of structural adjustments, consolidated rights are being progressively withdrawn from workers throughout Latin America. In a parallel development, philanthropic projects from the so-called Third Sector have been expanding in numbers and scope, in an attempt to address poverty and exclusion which implies another version of citizenship.

Today the different dimensions of citizenship and the dispute among its various uses and definitions are the ground of political struggle in several countries of Latin America, and are a recurrent reference in most of them. These disputes reflect the trajectory of the confrontation between a democratising, participatory project of implementing citizenship and the neoliberal offensive to curtail the possibilities this implied.

This paper will introduce the Latin American debate on citizenship.¹ It examines, first, the general conditions of the emergence of the notion in different countries of the continent. Secondly, it discusses what can be seen as general features assumed by the redefinition of citizenship that lead to its emergence, linked to the democratising processes in Latin America in the last decades. This analysis takes as its main reference the pioneering process of redefinition that took place in Brazil because it is considered the most elaborate one and has been, to some extent, a reference for other countries in Latin America and elsewhere. Third, in trying to avoid the risks of excessive generalisation, it discusses the different nuances and emphasises the notion of citizenship has taken up as they may not only provide a further understanding of the debate but also highlight the distinctions and specificities of citizenship in different countries. Finally, it focuses on the neoliberal versions of citizenship and the dilemma these pose to the original democratising meanings and uses of citizenship in Latin America.

¹ I am deeply grateful to the authors of the country bibliographical reviews, which made possible the broadening of the analysis of this debate: Ernesto Isunza Vera (Mexico), Gabriel de Santis Feltran (Brazil), Susana Wappenstein (Argentina), Margarita Fernandez (Chile) and Leandro Peñaranda C. (Colombia). The reviews can be found at www.drc-citizenship.org.

2 The emergence of citizenship as a political reference in Latin America

Increasingly adopted since the mid 1980s and 1990s by popular movements, excluded sectors, NGOs, trade unions and parties of the left as a central element in their political strategies, the notion of citizenship spread first as a common reference among a variety of social movements such as those of women, blacks and ethnic minorities, homosexuals, retired and senior citizens, consumers, environmentalists, urban and rural workers and those organised around urban issues in the large cities, such as housing, health, education, unemployment, violence, etc. (Foweraker 1995; Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998). These movements, organised around different demands, found references to citizenship not only a useful tool in their specific struggles but also, in some cases, a powerful articulating link between them. The general claim for equal rights, embedded in the predominant conception of citizenship, was then extended and specified according to the different claims at stake. As part of this process of redefining citizenship, a strong emphasis was put on its cultural dimension, incorporating contemporary concerns with subjectivities, identities and the right to difference. Thus, on the one hand, the building of a new citizenship was to be seen as reaching far beyond the acquisition of legal rights, requiring the constitution of active social subjects, defining what they consider to be their rights and struggling for their recognition. On the other hand, this contextual emphasis asserted the need for a radical transformation of the cultural practices that reproduce inequality and exclusion throughout society.

If the notion of citizenship spread throughout the continent, the specific timing and the different features it assumed have been determined by the various national political contexts in different countries. The emergence of the notion of citizenship as relevant to the political and academic debate can be observed first in Brazil, in the early 1980s, in Colombia and Peru by the end of the 1980s, by the mid-1990s in Ecuador, when these countries saw the ascension of democratic movements (Menéndez Carrión 2002–2003). In Chile, it emerged by the second half of the 1990s, already informed by the neoliberal agenda which was by then well established in the country. Later on, in Mexico, its emergence coincided with the decline of the dominant regime of the Mexican Revolution Party (PRI), and more recently in Argentina, it gained strength during social mobilisation against the ‘political class’.²

In determining the differences in the uses of the notion within Latin America, a set of interrelated factors emerges. The most important single factor seems to be the distinct experiences of social movements in each particular region. Thus, both the diversity and intensity of such experiences may account for the very emergence of citizenship as a relevant concept in the political debate as well as for the different timings of this emergence. In addition, and most importantly, the different nuances citizenship assumed in the various countries may be related to the concrete experiences of their social movements. Thus, for instance, the emphasis on political rights mainly conceived of as the right not only to vote but also to have transparent and truthful elections has been predominant in the Mexican context until very recently. On the other hand, emphasis on the right to difference along multicultural lines has

² The term ‘political class’ refers to the relatively small group of people who have dominated political power in Argentina for the past several decades.

assumed a particular importance in national contexts with a heavy presence of indigenous movements such as Colombia and Ecuador. The significance of women's, black and homosexual movements in particular countries, such as Brazil, also pointed towards an emphasis on the right to difference, but on different terms. The absence of a large indigenous population and the particular racial history and ideologies may have contributed to definitions of the right to difference not so strongly marked by multiculturalist approaches.

With respect to national political contexts, a crucial constitutive dimension is the particular configurations of both the state and civil society and their mutual relationships. Particular meanings of citizenship, but especially the conditions and timing of their emergence, may be related to these configurations. Recently, for instance, the mode of implementation of the neoliberal model has substantially changed those configurations, affecting particular meanings of citizenship. In countries where there was an early, systematic and virtually consensual implementation of the neoliberal model which was then able to practically eliminate viable alternatives, the predominant definitions of citizenship follow neoliberal lines and the state has been the main force behind such definitions. This seems to be the case in Chile, where a reconfigured neoliberal state may, itself, have been responsible for the very emergence of citizenship in the political debate. In contrast, during the 1980s, in Brazil, a different constellation of forces made it possible for civil society in general and social movements in particular to take a leading role in the appropriation and redefinition of citizenship from their different perspective. When the implementation of the neoliberal agenda gained force in the mid-1990s, its definition of citizenship emerged in conflict with the previous one articulated by social movements and had to confront it.

The importance of these configurations is also evident when we turn to an additional factor in determining different uses and meanings of citizenship: national history. Thus, particular historical approaches to citizenship, which express specific modes of relationships between state and society as well as particular configurations of both, are present in and can help to explain the current formats of the notion of citizenship in different national contexts. To mention one example, the weight of populist experiences and their corresponding modes of citizenship can be perceived in the ways in which Brazilian social movements insisted in their autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state and the political parties and the predominant mechanisms of direct and participative democracy as a substantial part of their notion of citizenship. In a different sense, that same experience may also be perceived in the pre-existence of a quite powerful 'language of rights', derived from the recognition of social rights, established by Vargas in the 1940s, which paved the way to the populist regimes that followed.

An additional difference, related to all of the above, are the ways in which people refer to the idea of citizenship in the different national contexts. Beyond the different emphases on distinct dimensions of the notion, there is also a variation in the degree of 'explicitness' and 'directedness' in the analyses of citizenship. Although the reference to citizenship is recurrent and the themes covered by these analyses are practically the same, the articulation of those themes under the notion of citizenship is more or less explicit. Thus, if in Brazil or Chile, for instance, there are a significant number of initiatives openly

focused on citizenship, in other countries we have to look for discussions about social movements, civil society, public spaces, identity and, particularly, participation in all its various forms, in order to understand the different approaches to citizenship. A Mexican analyst, among others, underlines that a conceptual separation between civil society and citizenship hardly exists in the national debate (Izunsa Vera 2004).

As it is connected to the specific developments mentioned above, such a variation follows particular timings and is more or less significant depending on the period considered. Hence, more implicit or secondary deployments of notions of citizenship have become more explicit and focused as new cycles or stages of democratic process take place. These stages, often linked to changes in the national constellations of political forces, may entail more focused and systematic analyses of citizenship. In addition, a powerful factor in these dynamics of citizenship throughout Latin America seems to be a kind of ‘demonstration effect’ among different countries that learn from each other’s experiences, a process intensified with the growth of regional networks of social movements, NGOs, academics and even political parties. The most outstanding example of that is the Brazilian experience of participatory budgeting, initiated in 1989 in Porto Alegre and underway today in several countries across the continent.

2.1 Redefining citizenship in democratic ways

The redefinition of citizenship, in order to conform to its new strategic role envisaged by social movements, had to confront dominant versions of the notion. Thus, the point of departure of such redefinition has been the conception of *the right to have rights*, which supported the emergence of new political subjects, actively defining what they consider to be their rights and struggling for their recognition.³ In this sense, in contrast with previous conceptions of citizenship as strategies of the dominant classes and the state for the gradual and limited political incorporation of excluded sectors, where greater social integration was a legal and political condition necessary to the implementation of capitalism, this new a strategy is part of a political project of the non-citizens, of the excluded. It is a citizenship ‘from below’.

In order to understand the full meaning of this redefinition of citizenship, I will briefly examine previous dominant conceptions of citizenship in Brazil: ‘*cidadania concedida*’ (‘citizenship by concession’) (Sales 1994) and also Carvalho (1991) and ‘*cidadania regulada*’ (‘regulated citizenship’) (Santos 1979). Emerging in different historical contexts, these two versions of citizenship are deeply rooted in Brazilian political culture and are still very much alive in our socio-political imaginary. Similar versions of them can be found in several countries such as, in the former case, states sharing historical characteristics such as the oligarchic politics based on the *latifundio*.⁴ The latter version is also shared with strong states which

³ According to some definitions from participants of social movements, sometimes citizenship is even *thought of* as consisting of this very process. Thus agency and the capacity to struggle are seen by them as evidence of their citizenship, even if other rights are absent. See Dagnino *et al.* (1998: 11-43).

⁴ *Latifundios* are the large land estates, owned by a single proprietor, usually based on monoculture and cheap labour force that characterised the land holding structure in Latin America

took the lead in organising society along corporatist lines. Thus, the struggle of social movements to redefine citizenship and the particular directions it assumed have to be understood within a historical context, as a struggle to break up and confront dominant conceptions and the practices they guide.

Santos (1979) coined the expression '*cidadania regulada*' ('regulated citizenship') to designate what has been the first relatively wide and systematic recognition of social rights by the state in Brazilian history, through the Consolidation of Labour Laws, in 1943. However, first, such recognition did not have a universal character but was restricted to workers. Second, only those workers in professions recognised and regulated by the state were entitled to social rights.⁵ Third, and most importantly, only workers belonging to unions recognised and regulated (that is to say, controlled) by the state were entitled to social rights. This version of citizenship, a masterpiece of ambiguity so to speak, ingeniously intertwined the recognition of both social rights and the political existence of workers and their organisations, while maintaining state political control over unions and workers. Thanks to this ambiguity, it constituted one of the pillars of the populist structures that presided over Brazilian politics until 1964. In addition, it promoted an exclusionary view of citizenship as a condition strictly related to labour that is still very much alive in Brazilian society.⁶

Although one can see origins of it in what was just described, the conception of citizenship as a concession (*'cidadania concedida'*) is described by Sales (1994) as having its roots in a more remote past. This has been seen as emerging from the rule of large landowners (*latifundiários*), whose private power within their rural domains was converted into political power in the Brazilian state and society after the creation of Brazil as a republic, at the end of the nineteenth century. This view of citizenship is an attempt to account for what would be, in fact, an absence of citizenship. In this sense, such a view of citizenship relied on a conception of rights as mediated by power relations characterised by rule and submission, transferred from the private to the public (civil) domain. In this version, rights are conceived of as favours, as 'gifts' from the powerful, in what Sales calls 'a culture of gift' (*'cultura da dádiva'*). The maxim, as put by Sales, 'In Brazil either you give orders or you plead' (*'No Brasil ou bem se manda ou bem se pede'*), expresses an authoritarian oligarchic conception of politics, characterised by favouritism, and clientelistic and tutelage mechanisms. The lack of distinction between the private and public realms obstructs the emergence of a notion of rights as inalienable claims and furthers a conception of rights as favours. It is in this sense that *'cidadania concedida'* can be seen as, in fact, a peculiar 'absence' of citizenship. This peculiarity relies on the fact that rights while present, would be considered as gifts or favours from those who have the power to concede them. The embeddedness of this view in Brazilian culture expresses the resilience of social authoritarianism and still obstructs the political organisation of the excluded, extending the political control of the elites.

⁵ Gradually new professions have been included but exclusions remained for decades, such as that of the rural workers, whose social rights have been recognised only in 1964, or the domestic labourers, who are not fully entitled to social rights until the present.

⁶ To this day, when stopped by the police, Brazilians show their 'worker's card' (*'carteira de trabalho'*) in order to prove their status as 'decent citizens'.

The concern of Brazilian and Latin American social movements to assert a right to have rights is clearly related to extreme levels of poverty and exclusion but also to the pervasive *social authoritarianism* that pervades the unequal and hierarchical organisation of social relations as a whole. Class, race, ethnic, and gender differences constitute the main bases for a social classification which has historically pervaded Latin American cultures, establishing hierarchical categories of people with their respective 'places' in society. Thus, for excluded groups, the perception of the political relevance of cultural meanings embedded in social practices is part of their daily life. As part of the authoritarian, hierarchical social ordering of Latin American societies, to be poor means not only economic, material deprivation, but also to be submitted to cultural rules that convey a complete lack of recognition of poor people as subjects and bearers of rights. In what Telles (1994) called the incivility embedded in that tradition, poverty is a sign of inferiority, a way of being in which individuals become unable to exercise their rights. This cultural deprivation imposed by the absolute absence of rights – which ultimately expresses itself as a suppression of human dignity – becomes then constitutive of material deprivation and political exclusion.

The perception of this cultural social authoritarianism as a dimension of exclusion beyond economic inequality and political subordination constituted a significant element in the struggle to redefine citizenship. First, it made clear that the struggle for rights, for the right to have rights, had to be a political struggle against a pervasive culture of social authoritarianism. This prepared the ground for urban popular movements to establish a connection between culture and politics which became embedded in their collective action.⁷ Such a connection has been a fundamental element in establishing the articulation with other social movements – more obviously cultural, such as ethnic, women, gay, ecology and human rights movements – in the search for more egalitarian relations at all levels, helping to demarcate a distinctive, broader view of democracy. The reference to rights and citizenship grew to constitute the core of a common ethical-political field where a large part of those movements and other sectors of society were able to share their struggles and mutually reinforce them. For instance, the emergence of the 'Sindicato Cidadão' (Citizen Trade Unions) in the early 1990s indicates the recognition of that reference within the Brazilian labour movement (Rodrigues 1997), traditionally inclined to more strict class-based conceptions.

Secondly, that perception underpinned a broadening of the scope of citizenship, whose meaning became far greater than the formal-legal acquisition of a set of rights, within the political-judicial system. The struggle for citizenship was thus presented as a *project for a new sociability*: a more egalitarian format for social relations at all levels, new rules for living together in society (negotiation of conflicts, new sense of a public order, of public responsibility, a new social contract) and not only for the incorporation into the political system in the strict sense. A more egalitarian format for social relations at all levels implies the recognition of the other as the bearer of valid interests and of legitimate rights. It also implies a public dimension of society where rights can be consolidated as public parameters for the interlocution, the debate and the negotiation of conflicts, making possible the reconfiguration of an ethical dimension of

⁷ For an example, among many, of how popular movements developed this connection, see Dagnino (1995) for an analysis of a dwellers' (*favelado*) movement in the city of Campinas, in Paulo (1995).

social life. Such a project unsettles not only social authoritarianism as the basic mode of social ordering in Latin American societies but also more recent neoliberal discourses which erect private interest as a measure for everything, hence obstructing the possibilities for an ethical dimension of social life (Telles 1994).

Thirdly, as the notion of rights is no longer limited to legal provisions or the access to previously defined rights or the effective implementation of abstract, formal rights, it includes the invention/creation of *new* rights, which emerge from specific struggles and their concrete practices. In this sense, the very determination of the meaning of rights and the assertion of something as a right are themselves objects of political struggle. The rights to autonomy over one's own body, to environmental protection, to housing, are examples (intentionally very different) of new rights. In addition, this redefinition comes to include not only the right to equality, but also the right to difference, which specifies, deepens and broadens the right to equality.⁸

An additional important consequence of such a broadening in scope was that citizenship is no longer confined within the limits of the relationship with the state: the recognition of rights regulates not only the relationships between the state and the individual but also society itself, as parameters presiding social relations at all levels. The process of building citizenship as the affirmation and recognition of rights was seen as a process of transformation of practices rooted in the society as a whole. Such a political strategy implies moral and intellectual reform: a process of social learning, of building up new kinds of social relations. This implies, on the one hand, obviously, the constituting of citizens as active social subjects. But, on the other hand, for society as a whole, it requires learning to live on different terms with these emergent citizens who refuse to remain in the places which were socially and culturally defined for them.

Finally, an additional element in this redefinition transcends a central reference in the liberal concept of citizenship: the claim to access, inclusion, membership, belonging, to an already given political system. In Brazil, what is at stake in struggles for citizenship is more than the right to be included as a full member of society; it is the right to participate in the very definition of that society and its political system, to define what we want to be members of. The direct participation of civil society and social movements in state decisions constitutes one of the most crucial aspects in the redefinition of citizenship, because it conveys the potential for radical transformations in the structure of power relations of Latin American societies. Recent political practices inspired by this redefinition of citizenship help to flesh out future possibilities. One example is participatory budgeting, which has been implemented in the cities governed by the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Worker's Party PT) in Brazil.⁹ Through participatory budgeting, marginalised sectors and their organisations have opened up space for the democratic control of the state through the effective participation of citizens in decision-making. Begun in Porto Alegre in 1989 in the

⁸ For a discussion on citizenship and the connections between the right to difference and the right to equality, see Dagnino (1994).

⁹ For Participatory Budget processes, see Santos (1998), Avritzer (2002), Abers (1998), Baierle (1998), Fedozzi (1997), Avritzer and Navarro (2003).

south of Brazil, participatory budgeting exists today in around 100 other cities in the country¹⁰ and is being considered by Mexico, Uruguay, Bolivia, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and others. Also inspired by this notion of citizenship, the struggle of social movements and other sectors of civil society pushed for the inclusion of mechanisms of direct and participatory democracy in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, known as the ‘Citizen Constitution’. This included the creation of management councils for public policy (*Conselhos Gestores de Políticas Públicas*), with membership equally divided between civil society and government, at city, state, and federal levels, to develop policies on issues related to health, children and adolescents, social services, women, etc. Similar institutional innovations are popping up all over the continent as responses to citizen’s claims to share the power of decision-making in public policies, from the *consejos electorales ciudadanizados* of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) in Mexico, to the *conselhos gestores* in Brazil or the *mesas de concertación* in Peru, to mention a few examples. However, the extent to which these new institutional arrangements provide effective possibilities for participation in decision-making processes varies considerably for a number of reasons. In addition, in many countries, legislation defining and formalising citizen participation has been approved or is under discussion (*Leyes de Participación* in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Paraguay, Chile). The variation in the meanings attributed to participation and the different forms it can assume is evident even in the formal legal discourse of these laws. These differences are of course very present in the political struggles that have surrounded the formulation and the implementation of these laws and in the political and academic debate on participation (Schattan Coelho 2005). In any case, its centrality with respect to notions of citizenship and also to current definitions of democracy is notorious and requires further consideration.

2.1.1 Citizenship and participation

Among all the different layers combined in the concept of citizenship in Latin America today, participation seems to be the one highlighted the most. Given this emphasis, a great deal of the debate on citizenship is found in analyses of participation. Thus, different views on participation often imply alternative conceptions of citizenship.

Participation has been seen by analysts and activists alike as a requirement, a condition, but also a guarantee of democracy and citizenship. This emphasis on participation conveys a view of citizenship as a form of action, indicated by the ubiquitous expression ‘active citizenship’: to become a citizen is to participate, to struggle, to exercise the right to participate in order to achieve, materialise and guarantee other rights. In addition, such an emphasis often overlaps with a stress on citizenship as a process of the constitution of subjects: to be an ‘active citizen’ is to become a political subject, aware of his /her rights and power to struggle for them.

¹⁰ Because of their success, Participatory Budgeting (PB) have been adopted recently by other parties in Brazil. Some of them have clearly populists motivations for supporting PB.

If the idea of participation is practically unanimous as a crucial dimension of citizenship, the distinction among different views of citizenship is then transferred to the difference among the various conceptions of participation itself. In the spectrum formed by these different views, it is possible to say that one extreme is represented by a conception embedded in the dissemination of the term '*ciudadanía*' (citizenship) as a synonym for 'population', 'inhabitants' or 'society in general'. We find even in this loose use of the word the recognition that the population is formed of citizens, bearers of rights, which is thus acknowledged in political discourse as a necessary reference. In Mexico, for instance, this use of citizenship became generalised in the last six years, expressing the changes in the nature of the political regime. Not by chance, it is in Brazil that this use is less frequent, due to the older and more consolidated role played by the notion of citizenship in the articulation of a democratising political project. In some countries, such as Argentina, this use can be seen as a symptom of the rupture with the category of *pueblo* or *povo* (people), which would indicate the decline of the previously predominant populist paradigm in the relations between state and society (Cheresky 2001).

The expression '*participación ciudadana*' (citizen participation) may represent a step further in that spectrum to the extent that it includes among those rights, the right to participate in public affairs, although it does not clarify the conditions, meanings and status of that participation.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find clearer and more radical conceptions of collective, societal participation, constitutive of some views of citizenship. This is the case in countries where institutional spaces of citizen participation with deliberative power have already been established, usually through a prior struggle to ensure the right to participation. In these cases, citizen participation is often defined as '*compartir poder*' or '*partilba de poder*' (sharing power) in decisions referring to public policies or to municipal budgeting, for instance. In between these two extremes, there is a plurality of views linking the exercise of citizenship to a variety of forms of collective participation, both of which relate more directly to state decisions (consulting, monitoring, social control, etc) as well as political organising in the defence or creation of rights (social movements, NGOs and a plurality of wider societal articulations and networks).

As with the notion of citizenship, conceptions of participation are disputed by different political projects and with different views of democracy. Thus, there is a persistent concern in defining participation and even establishing typologies of the different kinds of participation (for instance, in Gonzalez, Segura and Bolivar 1997; Durand Ponte 2003). One of the main criteria on distinguishing different conceptions of citizenship is whether or not they attribute a political character to participation. For Baño (1998), for instance, in clear contrast with the views that emphasise the sharing of power, citizen participation should be understood as the 'intervention of collective private interests in public activities', distinct from 'merely political participation' of an associative nature. More recently, the notion of 'social capital', strongly connected with neoliberal approaches, is increasingly being used in association with notions of participation and citizenship (Salazar 1998; PNUD 2000).

Emphasis on participation also reflects and responds to the particular configurations of national contexts and the internal political debate. In Chile, for instance, the discussion on citizenship and participation is heavily permeated by a resistance in Chilean society to collective action and to

participation, as a result of a state historically centralised and a lack of both institutional and interpersonal thrust at the cultural level (Arrau and Avendaño 2001 and 2003; Martínez Keim 2001 and 1999; Jans 2003; Salazar 1998). In countries with experiences of armed struggle, subsequent or parallel forms of participation have been hailed as a ‘rehabilitation of the political sphere’ and taken as expressions of the formation of a citizenship movement and the expansion of the public sphere (see Cheresky 2001 and 2002 on Argentina; and González, Segura and Bolívar 1997 on Colombia). Recent waves of mobilisation in Argentina, captured by the ubiquitous slogan *¡Qué se vayan todos!* (Throw them all out!), in reference to the entire political elite, are at the centre of the debate on participation and its meaning with respect to the notion of citizenship (Cheresky 2002; Wappenstein 2004; Briones *et al.* 2004, among dozens of other pieces). The main question under discussion is whether or not these new formats express citizenship-related claims or if they only suggest a generalised rejection of politics. In Brazil, the current debate on participatory democracy is mostly concerned with the extent to which citizen participation in the new institutional formats created after the 1988 Constitution strengthens citizenship. Thus, the discussion focus on the limits and obstacles faced by participation in those spaces, as well as on the positive results it has produced (Tatagiba 2002; Avritzer 2002).

The heavy emphasis placed on participation as a central element of citizenship has been receiving a number of critiques. One first line of critical appraisal expresses concern with what is seen as a reification or a mystification of participation. Múnera (1999) for instance, calls attention to the value-charged optimistic analyses of participation that have transformed it in a virtuous pole in opposition to the restrictive and exclusionary nature of the Colombian political regime. Such dominant analytical tendency would have blocked an analysis of the limits of participation practices as well as an appropriate recognition of other valuable political forms and expressions such as representation, delegation, etc. Menéndez Carrión (2003) criticises this tendency because it assumes a connection between participation and citizenship that should not be taken for granted but should remain ‘an open question’. For her, the meaning, reach and significance of participation with respect to citizenship needs to be examined in each concrete case: ‘participatory and mobilisation actions are not necessary linked to civic understandings of the political, either as an antecedent or as an effect’ (Menéndez Carrión 2003: 27).

In addition, the recent appropriation of participation (as well as of civil society and citizenship) by neoliberal projects in Latin America, mentioned above, is seen as responsible for the increasing ambiguity around the term, and of participatory practices themselves. Thus, the emphasis on participation as a dimension of citizenship is being received critically by analysts who see a ‘paradox’ (Guerra 1997) or ‘perverse effects’ (Dagnino 2002) in the current realities of participation in Latin America. Guerra sees the current processes of participation in Chile and Latin America, especially at the local level, as a field of dispute between those who seek the instrumentalisation of these to reach the goals of the neoliberal project and those who struggle against this project, from the perspective of the defence and extension of the exercise of human rights, democracy, social autonomy and profound reforms of political society and the state.

The reconciliation between, on the one hand, the emphasis on participation and on mechanisms of participatory democracy as instruments of citizenship and, on the other hand, the traditional forms of representative democracy is also a significant concern in the debate. This is true especially in those countries where participatory experiences proliferate, usually in connection with constitutional changes that have recognised the legitimacy of direct democracy, such as, for instance, Brazil and Colombia. The problem is a difficult one, since those new mechanisms have been instituted partly because of a widespread dissatisfaction with the functioning of representative democracy, with its incapacity to effectively represent the public interest and to promote and extend citizenship. Most of the defenders of participatory democracy asserts its complementary character *vis-à-vis* traditional representative institutions and share the assumption that the latter would be positively affected and transformed by the existence of the former. However, in practice, conflicts exist between what are, in fact, institutions and mechanisms with different sources of legitimacy. Moreover, some analysts have identified the risk of further corrosion of the images of institutions like political parties and parliaments as valid instruments in the building of citizenship, aggravating an already existing ‘crisis of representation’ (Pachano 2003).

2.1.2 Citizenship and human rights

The connection between citizenship and human rights played a crucial role in the very emergence of the notion of citizenship in several countries in Latin America. The struggle for human rights constituted the core of the initial resistance against authoritarian regimes in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile during the 1970s. It also materialised later on in Peru and Colombia, where the situation of armed conflict involving government military forces and the guerrilla led to claims for peace on the basis of defence of human rights. It is possible to argue that the origins of current notions and practices of citizenship can be found in those struggles. A number of elements justify such an argument. First, the reference to rights and the recourse to judicial and legal provisions, which were the main instruments of human rights movements, introduced a new cultural-political basis upon which the idea of citizenship was able to develop. Such a basis implied a significant change in the views of leftist opposition sectors to the extent that it required relative trust in political institutions. Secondly, there was a significant broadening of the meaning of human rights (Saba 2002; Peruzzotti 2002; Panfichi and Muñoz 2002) which came to encompass a vast array of rights, leading to a ‘politics of rights’ and to a notion of citizenship able to encase them. From the initial concern with human rights violations such as arbitrary imprisonments, torture, and the disappearance and killing of individuals, the idea of human rights became to be conceived as a ‘right to life’ and therefore, to include claims to social rights such as health, education, housing, employment, etc. The category of ‘victims’ of human rights violations expanded: victims of the repression during the dictatorship, victims of police violence or victims of economic adjustment plans and their reduction of social rights, found a ‘common denominator’ in the category of rights (Wappenstein 2004). A typical example, in a book entitled *Democracy and Human Rights in Mexico*, Soto Martínez and Reygadas Robles-Gil (2003) bring together case studies focusing on the struggle of female workers in the

*maquiladora*¹¹ industry, of an indigenous people's struggle for their autonomy, and of citizens who organised to intervene in the creation of social policies. Thirdly, human rights movements in the 1970s and 1980s were able to establish new practices and ethical principles that are very much alive in contemporary struggles for citizenship. Analysing the Argentine experience, Wappenstein (2004) argues that the 'human rights movement created a culture of rights based on an ethical dimension that today supports the confrontation of the economic and materialistic reductionism of the neoliberal model'. In addition, 'Human rights organisations offer a model of activism that is autonomous, creative and often involves non-traditional actors and practices. With an entire generation of political leadership disappeared (emphasis added,¹² it has been largely human rights activism that became the model of political praxis and independent citizenship' (Wappenstein 2004: 21–2).

Furthermore, as authoritarian regimes receded, human rights movements also redefined their targets towards issues such as impunity of government officials, including the military and the police, most importantly, accountability. From the 1990s on, the idea of impunity for past human rights violations has been increasingly applied also to corruption by state officials and political elites, leading to a growing movement towards accountability and responsibility in several countries of Latin America. According to Peruzzotti and Smulovitz (forthcoming) 'previously socially tolerated or unquestioned practices are now not only being perceived as an affront but they are also being addressed in the form of right oriented claims'.

In situations of persisting armed conflict such as in Colombia, the defence of human rights as a crucial element of citizenship has faced new challenges. Romero (2003) identifies a 'dissociation between security and democracy', where security is presented as a precondition or as a value for which rights and freedom should be sacrificed, thus denying any viable concept of citizenship. The same contradiction is present in those who claim for rights and, at the same time, deny any legitimacy to the state. He also focus on the situation of 'desplazamiento forzado' (forced displacement), pointing out how the state acknowledges its duty to recognise special rights to displaced people reveals, in practice, its previous incapacity to guarantee conditions for citizenship.

2.1.3 Citizenship and women

Women's movements have been one of the leading forces in the struggle for democracy and citizenship in Latin America. As in many parts of the world, their struggle for rights, however, has been accompanied by a significant debate on the notion of citizenship and the western, white, male and liberal inspiration of its predominant version. Thus, as in other parts of the world, the Latin American debate has been heavily

¹¹ The *maquiladoras* are assembly plants, especially along the border between the United States and Mexico, to which foreign materials and parts are shipped and from which the finished product is returned to the original market, in order to take advantage of cheap labour force.

¹² 'Disappeared' (Desaparecidos) refers to those people abducted by the police and the military during the dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s in Latin America, which then vanished without a trace, usually having been tortured and killed.

influenced by the critique of citizenship produced by feminist theory. This debate is focused on the universalistic conception of citizenship, the rigid separation between public and private spaces, and the exclusion of reproductive and sexual rights (Molina 1998).

Against the universalistic conception of citizenship, women's movements have asserted the right to difference as a necessary component of citizenship. Furthermore, this assertion has been extended to include 'differences within difference': the recognition that there are important differences among women (ethnic and racial for instance) that cannot be obscured under a single identity. Thus, the acknowledgement of specific claims for rights coming from these groups of women has been part of the debate on citizenship in Latin America. Richards (2003), for instance, shows the difficulties faced by Mapuche women in Chile in their relationship with Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM – Women's National Service), the state agency in charge of women's rights, and its reluctance to acknowledge the specific issues of indigenous women.

Domínguez (1999), in her research on women and citizenship in Mexico, showed how particular emphases are attributed to the notion of citizenship by the urban women she interviewed. Along with more generalised elements, such as the association between citizenship and political participation, public responsibility, commitment to a collective project, local or national, women would tend to emphasise the respect for diversity and plurality as a significant component of citizenship. Most importantly, they tend to 'intertwine private and public processes' (Domínguez 1999: 18), thus establishing a connection between citizenship and the private domain. In addition, Feijóo (1998) points out that in Argentina, this is a largely recognised feature of women's movements, which translated into practice the original feminist motto 'the personal is political', thus widening the meaning of rights and citizenship. That connection expresses itself not only where claims for rights emerge from the private sphere but also when citizenship is understood, for instance, as 'independent personal development'.

The idea of 'personal development' as an important component of citizenship is also mentioned by Schild in her analysis of Chilean women (1998). But she points out the different meanings it has assumed in recent years. A cornerstone of the 'feminist agenda' developed by the women's movement to challenge traditional femininities and promote alternative female subjectivities, 'personal development' became central in neoliberal social policies. Destined to 'hierarchically integrate poor and working class women', these programmes, according to the Movimiento de Mujeres Populares (Movement of Popular Women), quoted by Schild, treat women 'as isolated individuals, without allowing for the creation of collective spaces where women can articulate and present their own demands' (Schild 1998: 108). Moreover, in contrast with the liberating meaning of alternative definitions of self, embedded in the feminist agenda, in such policies, the dominant conception of citizenship is that women should 'develop their individualism through the marketplace' (Schild 1998: 110).

The concern with a close association between citizenship and political participation, mentioned above, is also present in analyses of women's participation. In assessing social policies for the development of women's citizenship and democratisation of local governments in Chile, Provoste and Valdés (2000) point out that the intense participation of women does not translate into a political

reference and often strengthens precisely traditional gender roles. Moreover, the close relationship between participation and overcoming poverty in the local programmes strengthens the instrumentalisation of participation, leaving aside the more active aspects of citizenship. Studies on the political participation of conservative women in Mexico, increased with the rise of the National Action Party (PAN), showed a reinforcement of women's traditional roles and no correlation between this increase and advances in citizenship beyond a relative empowerment of the women involved (Barrera Bassols 2000; Ramirez Saiz and De la Torre 2002).

2.1.4 Citizenship and racial-ethnic-cultural diversity

The debate on citizenship in Latin America has been deeply influenced by the emergence of the 'politics of difference' or 'politics of identity' in the region. Besides the women's movements, others have seen in the notion of citizenship a useful tool in their struggle against exclusion and discrimination. Thus, indigenous and black movements have established a connection between the recognition of their own identities and the need for a redefined notion of citizenship. As with women's movements, this implied and required the recognition of specific rights or a 'differentiated citizenship'. Moreover, it introduced the idea of collective rights, pertinent to entire groups of people sharing ethno-cultural identities. Such collective rights include land rights as well as rights to autonomy, to maintain their own practices and customs (*usos y costumbres*), to regulate their social and political organisation (Grueso, Rosero and Escobar 1998). Arguing for a differentiated citizenship that would confront the liberal, uniform view of citizenship, Peña emphasises the principle of autonomy of indigenous people, the right to self-government and to specific representation *vis-à-vis* the state (Peña 2003). In discussing these collective rights, he points out the necessary link between respect for the individual and for cultural plurality, arguing that even from the perspective of liberal citizenship, it is impossible to defend the individual without, at the same time, defending the collective history of which that individual is part of.

According to some analysts, the politics of identity in Latin America differ from its manifestations in other contexts to the extent that it represents new sites for mobilising strategic resources to struggle against forms of segregation. It also represents a new avenue for ensuring access to a redefined citizenship understood as the possibility of projection to a political space wider than that of the local or ethnic community. In addition, the distinctive nature of Latin American ethnic mobilisation is in part possible because it is directed – and in certain ways fostered- by the countries of the region, as part of a wider process of democratic renovation and recognition of the importance of civil society. To those countries, the organised continuity of ethnic groups that are legitimately constituted and bearers of specific rights, under the authority of the state, would be a preferable alternative to the insistence on traditional assimilation policies (Gros 2000).

The debate generated by indigenous and black movements affected the redefinition of citizenship to a limited extent, but also provoked important legal changes. The constitutional definition of countries such as Colombia (in 1991) and Ecuador (in 1998) as 'multicultural and multiethnic', as well as constitutional provisions concerning indigenous rights in Brazil (in 1988) are significant evidences of the

impact of this redefined conception of citizenship, however problematic the practical consequences of legal provisions are in Latin America. In Mexico, indigenous movements failed to obtain full recognition of their claims for citizenship from the National Congress. These claims, formulated in the San Andrés Agreements between the Zapatista movement and the federal government in 1996 and later approved by the National Indigenous Forum, included the recognition of rights of women, children and elder people *inside* the indigenous communities, in addition to rights to political autonomy and representation. The Mexican National Congress limited the latter to the local communities and put both the formal recognition of indigenous peoples and the implementation of indigenous rights in the sphere of the decisions that had to be made by local legislative bodies (de la Peña 2004). In addition, the difficulties faced by *mesas de concertación* (consensus roundtables) in indigenous provinces in Peru and the extremely conflictual situation in Bolivia indicate caution in the face of overtly optimistic analyses on the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights in the continent.

Developments associated with the connection between identity and citizenship have also received critical analyses. Analysing it in the Ecuadorian debate, Pachano (2003) argues that, from the 1990s onwards, the emphasis on the political and juridical recognition of the indigenous identity, i.e. its connection with the question of citizenship, determined 'a relegation of the construction of that identity at the level of social relations, especially in everyday life' (Pachano 2003: 43). In spite of the advances in rights and liberties, the exclusion of indigenous peoples has persisted. This is a recurrent argument in the discussion on citizenship when it is conceived strictly at the juridical level. Against this strict conception, a large part of its redefinition in Latin America has emphasised the cultural dimension of citizenship and widened its focus in order to encompass social relations as a whole, as discussed before. Moreover, it is impossible to isolate the juridical recognition of rights, particularly in recent situations of democratic construction, from the whole process which makes this possible. The public presence of ethnic groups struggling for recognition and the debate sparked by their presence constitute, at the same time, expressions of and conditions for social and cultural change. The juridical existence of rights has proved to be a crucial tool in their struggle for recognition beyond the parameters for daily social relations. A different critique comes from Bolívar (2001) who, drawing on the Colombian experience, examines the political consequences of the connection between identity and citizenship. Her main argument refers to the fragmentation and lack of articulation between different identities claiming political recognition. The result is that claims deriving from different types of exclusion and social and political inequality remain isolated in specific spaces, in terms of their relationship with the state, which are segmented and do not communicate with each other. Nor do they communicate with traditionally political forms of organisation such as parties and political movements. Furthermore, the new status formally achieved by cultural and ethnic communities has continued to deepen or invert difference, their negative representation, and the disarticulation between claims of ethnic communities and the claims made by peasants and poor *mestizos*. Although ethnic and cultural communities had achieved a better relationship with the state after the 1991 Constitution, they were not able to project themselves into the larger society nor articulate proposals for it. To that extent, she argues, the emphasis on identity would amount to a de-politicisation of the public

space. The more general and crucial question addressed by Bolívar, as by many other analysts around the world, including and particularly those affiliated with post-modernist conceptions, is whether or not social plurality and the different identities which express it can be articulated at all, in decentred contemporary societies. Bolívar argues that this question implies a constant ambivalence between the social and the political, and asks if citizen identity is, rather than a specific identity, a way of articulating other identities. Recognising that the problem of articulation cannot be solved *a priori* but rather as a practical question, Bolívar asserts the need ‘to recognise the different identities that transform citizenship but without allowing it to get dissolved in isolated claims, in the merely subjective moment of social reality where actors are concerned about themselves and nothing else’ (Bolívar 2001: 228).

Another recent case for exploring the connection between cultural diversity, identity and citizenship is the situation experienced by Latino migrants. Sharing some elements of recent approaches emerging in Europe, the discussion of new formats of citizenship in connection to processes of globalisation has been circulating both in the academic and political debate in Latin America and in the Latino communities in the United States. Part of this debate has focused on political citizenship and particularly the right to vote. Santamaría Gómez (2003) analyses claims from Mexican immigrants in the United States to vote in Mexican elections, arguing the bi-national, ‘trans-state’ character of these political subjects, which he characterises as the protagonists of a ‘post-modern nationality’ (Santamaría Gómez 2003). A much more complex view emerges from the conception of ‘cultural citizenship’ developed since the mid-1980s by a group of Mexican-American and Puerto Rican-American scholars and activists in the United States to emphasise the creation of new rights by ethnic minorities’ social movements (Rosaldo 1987; Flores and Benmayor 1997). Along this line, Flores argues that, in making claims ‘for a distinct social space’ for imagined communities of their own and for particular rights, Chicano and Mexican communities develop cultural practices that are politically oppositional in several ways. Through cultural citizenship, they are able to ‘emerge from the shadows as new subjects with their own claims for rights’; recreating a different vision of the society they want to be members of (Flores 2003). There is a clear connection between this conception of citizenship and the redefined version that has been produced by social movements in Brazil and other countries in Latin America discussed above. Both emphasise the constitution of active political subjects and the refusal of mere integration into the existing social and political ordering.

The redefined concept of citizenship spread all over Latin America in the last decade or so, largely under the motto of *participación ciudadana* (citizen participation), mostly bolstered by social movements and other sectors of civil society. In recent years, however, the notion of participation has been appropriated and fostered by the state and dominant sectors of society as part of a strategy for the implementation of neoliberal reforms. Thus, such participation is taking place in a scenario marked by a *perverse confluence* between, on the one hand, the participatory project constructed around the extension of citizenship and the deepening of democracy and, on the other hand, the neoliberal project that requires the shrinking of the social responsibilities of the state and its progressive exemption from its role as guarantor of rights.

The perversity is located in the fact that, pointing to opposite and even antagonistic directions, *both projects require an active, proactive civil society*. With different degrees of intensity, considering the different specific timings and modes of both neoliberal implementation and democratising processes, this is a scenario clearly present in Latin American countries today.

A particularly important ingredient in such perverse conditions is precisely the notion of citizenship, now redefined through a series of discursive shifts to make it suitable to its new use by neoliberal forces. This redefinition, as mentioned above, is part of the struggle between different political projects and attests to the symbolical power of citizenship. However, the appropriation of citizenship by dominant sectors in Latin America also indicates the mobilising capacity this notion has demonstrated in organising subaltern sectors around democratising projects. Thus, this new turn has been particularly significant in countries where previous appropriations by social movements and other sectors of civil and political society have been successfully disseminated. The need to neutralise the features assumed by citizenship, while trying to retain its symbolical power, made its appropriation by neoliberal forces necessary.

3 Neoliberal versions of citizenship

Although the debate on whether or not general neoliberal conceptions represent any significant innovation with respect to liberal views is still open, it is possible to argue for the existence of some substantial differences affecting the current reconfiguration of citizenship under neoliberalism. The most important of these is the practical abandonment of the very idea of rights, particularly of social rights, so exemplarily described in the work of Marshall (1950) and incorporated into a liberal view of citizenship towards the end of the nineteenth century. This practical abandonment is evident when what counts as social rights becomes understood as benefits and services to be looked for in the market. For example, in the neoliberal model, this can be seen in social organisations motivated by moral duties towards solidarity with the poor or by plain traditional charity, or in governmental emergency programmes to distribute food to the needy poorest. Such a reconfiguration cannot be understood if it is not placed within the more general framework that expresses the distinctive and novel character of what has been called neoliberalism. Thus, the redefinition of citizenship is intimately connected to a new phase of capitalist accumulation and its requirements, the excessive growth of the space of the market, the new structuring of labour, the reduction of the state with respect to its social responsibilities and the correlating new responsibilities of civil society. In addition, it also responds to the need to reduce the scope and significance of politics itself, in order to ensure the conditions for the implementation of those requirements (Dagnino 2004).

Neoliberal redefinitions of citizenship rely upon a set of basic procedures. Some of them recover the traditional liberal conception of citizenship; others are innovative and address new elements of the contemporary political and social configurations in Latin America. First, there is a reduction of the collective meaning entailed by social movements' redefinition of citizenship to a strictly individualistic understanding of it. Second, neoliberal discourses establish an alluring connection between citizenship and

the market. To be a citizen is then individual integration to the market, as a consumer and as a producer. This seems to be the basic principle subjacent to a vast number of projects that enable people to 'acquire citizenship', that is to say, to learn how to initiate micro-enterprises, how to become qualified for the few jobs still being offered, etc. In a context where the state progressively withdraws from its role as guarantor of rights, the market is offered as a surrogate site for citizenship. The current process of elimination of social and labour rights in the name of a free negotiation between workers and employers, 'flexibility' of labour, etc is well-known (Boito 1999; Minujín 1996; Telles 2001; Emmerij and del Arco 1998). Hence, for example, social rights ensured in the Brazilian Constitution since the 1940s, are now being eliminated under the rationale that they constitute obstacles to the free operation of the dynamics of the market and therefore restrict economic development and modernisation. Such rationale, in addition, transforms bearers of rights/citizens in the new villains of the nation, privileged enemies of political reforms intended to shrink state responsibilities.

In this sense, a peculiar inversion is taking place: the recognition of rights seen in the recent past as an indicator of modernity is becoming a symbol of 'backwardness', an 'anachronism' which hinders the modernising potential of the market (Telles 2001). Here we find a decisive legitimating factor of the conception of the market as a surrogate site for citizenship, as the market becomes the incarnation of modernising virtues and the sole route for the Latin American dream: the inclusion into the First World.

An additional procedure in the building of neoliberal versions of citizenship is evident in what constitutes a privileged target of democratising projects: the formulation of social policies towards poverty and inequality. A large part of the struggles organised around the demand for equal rights and the extension of citizenship have focused on the definition of such social policies. In addition, and consequently, the participation of social movements and other sectors of civil society in policy-making has been a fundamental claim within struggles for citizenship, in the hope it would contribute to the formulation of social policies directed towards the ensuring of universal rights to all citizens. With the advancement of the neoliberal project and the reduction of the role of the state, those social policies are increasingly formulated as strictly emergency efforts directed towards certain specific sectors of society whose conditions for survival are at extreme risk. The targets of these policies are not seen as citizens entitled to rights but as 'needy' human beings to be the targets of public or private charity.

A number of consequences derive from this. All of them have important impacts on the dispute between the different conceptions of citizenship. A first consequence relates to a displacement of issues such as poverty and inequality: as they are dealt with strictly as issues of technical or philanthropic management, poverty and inequality are being withdrawn from the public (political) arena and from its proper domain, that of justice, equality and citizenship, and reduced to a problem of ensuring minimal conditions for survival.

Moreover, the solution of such a problem is presented as a moral duty of every individual in society. Thus, the idea of a collective solidarity that underlies the classical reference to rights and citizenship is now being replaced by an understanding of solidarity as a strictly private moral responsibility. It is through this understanding of solidarity that civil society is being urged to engage in voluntary work and

philanthropic actions, under the appeal to a re-signified notion of citizenship now embodied in this particular understanding of solidarity. Citizenship is then reduced to solidarity with the poor, mostly understood as plain charity: in a typical TV commercial, exhaustively shown in Brazil, a well-known soap opera actress, inviting the public to donate the equivalent of US\$ 5.00 a month to a programme to assist children, concludes emphatically: ‘this is citizenship!’.

This understanding of citizenship is dominant in the action of entrepreneurial foundations, the so-called Third Sector, which has multiplied in countries like Brazil over the past decade. Characterised by a constitutive ambiguity between market-oriented interests to maximise their profits through their public image and what is referred to as a ‘social responsibility’, these organisations adopted wholesale a discourse of citizenship rooted in a moral individual solidarity. As in state sectors occupied by neoliberal forces, such a discourse is marked by the absence of any reference to universal rights or to the political debate on the causes of poverty and inequality.

Such a re-signification of citizenship and solidarity block their political dimension and erode the references to public responsibility and public interest, built with such difficulty through the democratising struggles of our recent past. As the distribution of social services and benefits tends to occupy the place formerly held by rights and citizenship, the claim for rights is obstructed since there are no institutional channels for it as service delivery distribution depends only on the good will and competence of the involved sectors. Even more dramatic, the very formulation of rights, and their enunciation as a public question, becomes increasingly difficult to do (Telles 2001). The symbolic efficacy of rights in building an egalitarian society is thus being dismissed and the consequence has been a reinforcement of an already powerful privatisation as the dominant code informing social relations.

A second set of consequences relates to the idea of the participation of civil society, which has constituted the most important dimension of citizenship and the core of the democratising project held by social movements and progressive sectors of society. At its ascending period (which has varied in different countries), this project has been able to ensure the creation of public spaces for citizen participation, including those designed to formulate public policies. With the advance of neoliberal forces and as part of the political dispute between these different projects, the notion of participation has also been appropriated and re-signified. As mentioned before, in the perverse confluence of these projects, neoliberal forces are requiring the participation of civil society. However, such participation increasingly means that the organisations of civil society have to assume functions and responsibilities restricted to the implementation and execution of these policies, providing services formerly considered duties of the state itself. The effective sharing of decision-making power, i.e. a full exercise of citizenship as conceived of by democratising forces, is being carried out in most of the cases within the limits of a framework presided by the dominant neoliberal project.

The relations between state and NGOs appear to constitute an exemplary field of this perverse confluence. Endowed with technical competence and grounded in social reality, ‘reliable’ interlocutors among the various possible interlocutors in civil society, they are frequently seen as the ideal partners by sectors of the state engaged in transferring their responsibilities to the sphere of civil society or to the

private sector. Parallel to this effort there is an additional governmental tendency towards the ‘criminalisation’ of social movements that remain combative and effectively articulated, such as, in Brazil, for example, the Landless Movement (MST). This selective operation, reinforced by the mass media and international financial agencies, is resulting in a growing conflation between ‘civil society’ and NGOs, where the meaning of the expression ‘civil society’ is more and more restricted to only these organisations, when not just as a mere synonym to ‘Third Sector’. ‘Civil society’ is thus reduced to those sectors that have an ‘acceptable’ behaviour according to government standards, therefore limited to what an analyst referred to as ‘the five-star civil society’ (Silva 2001).

For some NGOs, an eventual refusal of this role is played out when faced with a real opportunity to produce positive results to the ‘target public’ (social groups that benefit from specific projects), as fragmented, momentary, provisory and limited as it can be. For other NGOs, the fact that the state sees them as privileged interlocutors makes them see themselves as ‘representatives of civil society’, in a particular understanding of the notion of representativeness. They argue further that their representativeness derives from the fact that they express diffuse interests in society, to which they ‘would give voice’. This representativeness follows then, more from a coincidence between these interests and those defended by the NGOs, than from any explicit articulation, or organic relationship between them and the bearers of these interests. With the growing abandonment of organic links to social movements, which characterised NGOs in former periods, this political autonomisation creates a peculiar situation where these organisations are accountable to the international agencies which finance them and to the state which contracts them as service providers, but not to civil society, whose representatives they claim to be, nor to the social sectors whose interests they bear, nor to any other organisation of a truly public character. As well intentioned as they might be, their activities express fundamentally the desires of their directors.

3.1 The dispute around citizenship and the political struggles for the building of democracy

These attempts to reconfigure civil society and to redefine participation are intimately connected to emerging versions of neoliberal citizenship. Their central focus seems to be the de-politicisation of these two notions, which have been central references in the struggle for the extension of citizenship. The move towards such de-politicisation represents a counteroffensive to the advances in the redefinition of the political arena, which in Latin America have derived from that struggle. The emergence of the notion of a ‘Third Sector’ (the others being the state and the market) as a surrogate for civil society is particularly indicative of this attempt to implement a ‘minimalist’ conception of politics and to close the extension of public spaces of political deliberation opened up by democratising struggles.

The scenario produced by that perverse confluence composes today a ‘minefield’, where sectors of civil society, including NGOs not supportive of the neoliberal project, feel deceived when, motivated by an apparently shared discourse of citizenship, they get involved in joint actions with other sectors

committed to that project, mainly state agencies. Several social movements participating in some of the public spaces intended to formulate public policies share the same reaction. Some of them define this situation as a dilemma and several consider the possibility of rejecting altogether any further projects of joint action or being extremely selective and careful with respect to the correlation of forces present within these spaces and the concrete possibilities opened by them (Dagnino 2002). Under an apparent homogeneity of discourse, what is at stake in these spaces is the advancement or retreat of very different political projects and conceptions of citizenship.

Identifying this contemporary scenario should not obscure the fact that the dispute over different conceptions of citizenship is being intensely fought throughout Latin America, as the discussion in this paper intended to show. The struggle against inequality, historically accumulated and aggravated by current neoliberal policies, has been relying, in most countries, on democratic and participatory views of citizenship. With different emphases, under distinct thematic concerns and rhythms of development, according to the various national contexts and respective correlations of forces, those views of citizenship have been able to orient political action, particularly that of excluded sectors. The focus of such collective action relies upon the potential of citizenship as a crucial reference for the building of equality and democracy, whether it is directed towards the defence and extension of rights, the formulation of public policies guided by such principles, within the ambit of the state, or towards the creation of new rights and their recognition by society, affecting cultural dominant orders. The dispute around its meanings, the efforts to confront the reduction and displacement of its significance, constitutes the political debate in Latin America today.

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